

SCIENCE FICTION

132 PAGES

QUARTERLY

FEBRUARY
1958

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THE LOW AND
THE MIGHTY

by Randall Garrett

WE, THE MARAUDERS

FEATURE NOVEL

by Robert Silverberg



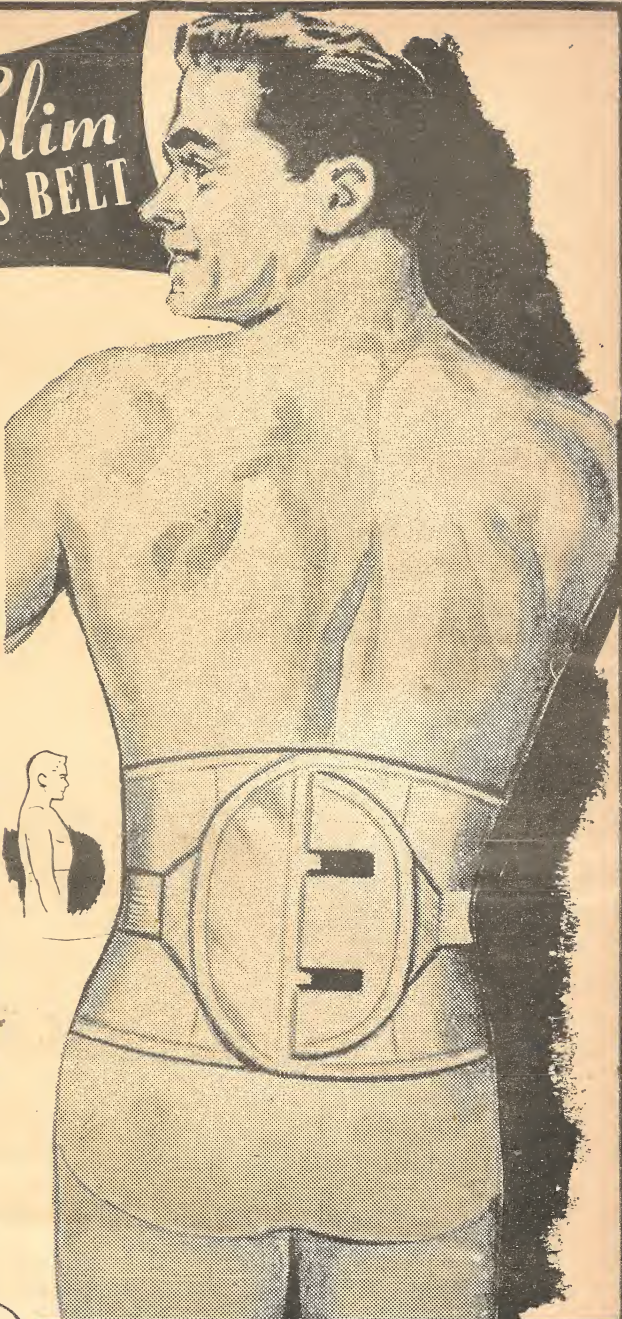
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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

35c

**132
Pages**

**ALL
STORIES
NEW**

Volume 5

February, 1958

Number 4

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Cover by Emsb

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KEY QUESTION



THEORETICALLY, the letter below belongs in "It Says Here", but since Mr. Gunn is not only commenting on the editorial in our August 1957 issue, but also upon a quotation from his review of damon knight's book, which was the basis of that editorial, I think that the editorial page is the place for his reply. Equal space for reply should include equally-prominent space; it's a palpable fraud to run the refutation of a page-one headline back amongst the girdle ads, in reduced type for both text and headings, and then maintain that everyone has a fair chance to talk back.

Dear Bob:

I found your editorial in the August *Science Fiction Quarterly* quite interesting but, it seems to me, a distortion of the point I was trying to make in my review of damon knight's "*In Search of Wonder* (Inside, March, 1957, pp. 23 ff). Allow me to quote from that review:

"Knight's most significant statement about literature is this: one of the distinguishing characteristics of 'reputable fiction' is that 'it tries to

deal honestly with the tragic and poetic theme of love-and-death'. The distinction is admirable; the implication that science fiction should do likewise is questionable.

"Love-and-death can be the theme of science fiction, but it doesn't have to be. A perfectly honest, perfectly sound, perfectly good science fiction novel can be written without ever approaching the theme. It is the unusual science fiction novel that can use it—and for a good reason.

"The other distinction of reputable fiction, knight says, is that 'it is fiction laid against familiar backgrounds.' This he dismisses as unimportant; it is a mistake.

"Against a familiar background, a serious story can deal with *nothing* but love-and-death. But if the background is unfamiliar, the background itself becomes thematic.

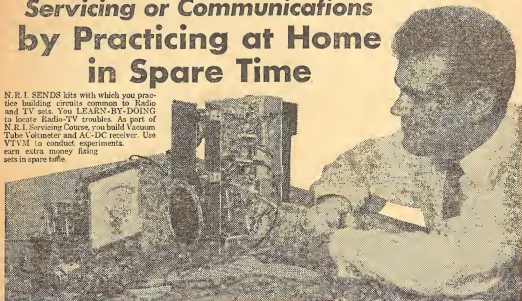
"In other words, reputable fiction deals primarily with the individual; science fiction, with society. Love-and-death can be a proper theme in science fiction only when it is the sociological problem as well. To drag it in simply for the sake of repute is to do violence to the work.

[Turn To Page 7]

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Key Question

(continued from page 5)

"Love-and-death is important, but it is not all-important. If an author wants to write seriously about love-and-death he would do well to stick to reputable fiction; readers and critics should not expect to find it in science fiction."

In your editorial, Bob, you state that the key word in knight's distinction is "honestly". I disagree. The key word is "theme". The theme of a story is what the story is about, and a good story is "about" only one thing. If it is about "love and death" it cannot be about the meeting of alien races, the necessity for humanity to have frontiers, the kind of world which might be shaped by ESP or controlled advertising, or any of a hundred other good science fiction themes.

There's no use saying that a story can be about these things and love-and-death, too. One or the other fades into the background or incidental detail. Or else the story breaks apart into bits about a science fiction idea and bits about "love-and-death".

The odd flavor sf fiction readers notice in the works of non-sf-fiction who tackle sf ideas is this: the science fiction is weak, usually hackneyed, and almost always used merely as a backdrop; the love-and-death theme predominates. Similarly, certain sf writers arouse mixed emotions among readers because they are not really sf writers at all; they are "reputable" writers who merely happen to be using sf as a setting. Ray Bradbury, for instance, does not write science fiction stories. He never did. He writes about love-and-death. The sf is incidental. Good for Bradbury! But bad for sf.

If a sf writer should take knight's implied advice—and yours, Bob—he would have to do violence to his idea, and the idea is the be-all of sf. If he must be dishonest about one or the other, let him be dishonest about love-and-death. I would rather that he would be honest about his idea.

Themes of love-and-death are easy to come by; fresh ideas, different viewpoints are not. That is why we read sf—and write it.

It is a different matter to say that a writer should be honest in his characterizations. He writes about people, of course—or beings, at least. He should make them as well-rounded, as completely whole beings as is consistent with his main function—which is to dramatize his idea.

But this is not what knight said. If he had meant this, he should have said, "It tries to deal honestly with love and death." No themes, no tragedy and poetry, and no hyphens.

Science fiction, similarly, cannot be hyphenated. When it is, it becomes something less than science fiction, even though it may become something more reputable.

—James E. Gunn

WELL, JIM, I think you've made your position clear enough; and for the sake of those who missed round one, I'll recapitulate mine:

(1) I considered *honesty in treatment* of love and death) to be the most important aspect of damon's criteria, for distinguishing between "reputable" and "unreputable" fiction, while you favor *theme* as more important: both related to the phrase, "it tries to deal honestly with the tragic and poetic theme of love-and-death".

(2) I did not consider that such honest treatment in a story *necessarily* meant that this theme dominates the story to the extent that everything else is mere background, and any science fiction background a painted backdrop. This *has* happened, as we both know; and the results may, at times, have been admirable (and most "reputable") fiction—but *not* science fiction.

(3) I did consider that "the tragic

[Turn To Page 128]

WE, THE MARAUDERS

Novel of Invaders From Earth

by Robert Silverberg

illustrated by ESMH

The beings that dwelt on Ganymede didn't use metals, but they didn't want to deal with Earthmen, either; and Earth needed those metals. The Ganymedeans were harmless primitives, but that wouldn't do; pacifying such aliens, and grabbing their metal, wouldn't go with the public. So Ted Kennedy, of the Steward & Dinoli agency, found himself assigned to produce the biggest sell in history—convince the public that the Ganymedeans were not pathetic, somewhat cute, aliens, but vicious monsters that had to be subdued!

TED KENNEDY dreamed that guns blazed, innocent people died, and fire spread over the land as looming thermonuclear mushrooms hung in the skies.

He stirred fitfully, sighed, nearly woke, and sank back into sleep. But when morning came he felt pale and weary; he ended the insistent buzz of the alarm with an impatient wrist-snap and dangled his legs over the edge of the bed, rubbing his eyes. The sound of splashing water told him that his wife was already awake and in the shower.

He had never awakened easily. Still groggy, he shambled across the bed-

room to the cedar chest, groped for his robe, and headed for the kitchen. He punched buttons on the autocook, setting up breakfast.

Marge was out of the shower and drying herself when he returned to the bedroom to dress. "Breakfast up?" she asked.

Kennedy nodded and fumbled in the closet for his best suit—the dark green one with red lace trim. He wanted to look good today; the conference on Floor Nine was bound to be important, whatever it was.

"You must have had a bad dream last night," Marge said suddenly. "I can tell. You're still brooding."

The dream lingered on in
Kennedy's waking mind...



"I know; did I wake you up?"

"No. But I can see the dream's still with you. Tell me about it—and hurry up—or you'll miss the car pool."

"I dreamed we were at war," he said.

"But that's impossible, darling! There's been peace for years. There aren't going to be any more wars on Earth, Ted."

"Maybe not on Earth."

He tried to laugh it off. By the time he had finished breakfast some of the irrational fear-tide had begun to recede. It was nearly 6 A.M. when Marge dumped the dishes into the washer; the sun was rising over the low Connecticut hills. Kennedy finished dressing and gave his epaulets a light dusting of powdered gold.

At 6:20, Alf Haugen's shiny yellow 2044 Chevrolet-Cadillac drew up outside. Haugen was a stocky, meat-faced man with bright, sharp eyes; he worked at the desk behind Kennedy's in the Steward & Dinoli office, and this was his week to drive the car-pool auto.

Kennedy half-trotted down the walk to Haugen's car. He slid into the back; Lloyd Presslie and Mike Cameron moved over to make room for him. Haugen nudged the start-button and the car moved smoothly off toward the city.

DAVE SPALDING had been in the middle of a joke when they had stopped to pick up Kennedy, it seemed. He reached the punchline now; and everyone in the car but Kennedy laughed.

Kennedy had never liked Spalding. There was something about the slim, deeply-intense, unmarried young fourth-level man that annoyed him.

"Any of you know what the big deal brewing today is?" Mike Cameron asked suddenly.

"Did you get invited to Floor Nine too?" Kennedy asked.

"We all were; even Spalding. I guess Dinoli sent that memo to the whole third and fourth level yesterday."

"Maybe the agency's dissolving," Lloyd Presslie suggested sourly. "Or maybe Dinoli hired a bunch of top-level men away from Crawford & Burstein, and we're all being bounced down three notches."

Haugen shook his head. "It's some big new account the old man landed; I heard Lucille talking about it near closing time. When in doubt, ask Dinoli's secretary."

The car swung into the main Thruway artery. Kennedy said little; the thunderburst of H-bombs still echoed in his ears. . .

Some big new account. . . Well, even so, that shouldn't affect him. Kennedy had started handling public relations for Federated Bauxite Mines, Inc., only last week—a long-range project whose ultimate aim was to convince the people of a large Nebraska district that their economy would not be upset, and their water supply polluted, by the aluminum-seekers who had newly invaded their area. He had just begun; they wouldn't yank him off the account so soon. Or would they?

There was no predicting what Dinoli might do. Public relations was a tricky and fast-moving field; its province of operations was expanding constantly.

Ted Kennedy felt strangely tense, and for once the smooth purr of the throbbing turbo-electric generators beneath him failed to ease his nerves.

At 6:52, Haugen's car rolled off the Thruway and rode down the long slanting ramp that led into upper Manhattan. Two minutes later, they were at the corner of 123rd and Lenox, in the heart of the business district. Precisely at 7 A.M. Kennedy and his five car-pool companions were at their desks.

Kennedy's desk was neatly arranged,

as he had left it the afternoon before. The memo from Dinoli lay pigeonholed in the catchall; he unspindled it and read it through again.

Floor Nine, 2:13 P.M.

Dear Ted: Would you be good enough to come down to my office tomorrow morning at 9:00 or thereabouts? A matter of some urgency has come up and you'll be needed.

Kennedy dropped the note into his ready file. The casual "*or thereabouts*" in the note was to be ignored, he knew; either he arrived at Floor Nine at 9:00 sharp, or he bounced back to fifth-level in a hurry.

The morning moved along slowly. At five to nine, Kennedy and Alf Haugen left the third-level area, meeting Spalding in the outer offices where the fourth-level men worked, and rode downstairs to Floor Nine.

STEWARD & DINOLI occupied four floors. Dinoli's office (Steward had long since been eased out of any connection with the firm) sprawled over the bottom-most floor, Nine. Ten was the Agency's library and storage vault; the second, third and fourth level men worked on Eleven, the rest on Twelve.

Dinoli's office door was a thick plank of rich-grained oak, in which a tiny gold plaque reading *L. D. Dinoli* was deeply inset. The door swung open as they drew near.

Dinoli's private office was a room five times as long as it was broad. Dinoli himself sat at the head of a long, burnished table. He was a small, piercing-eyed man of 66, his face lean and fleshless and surmounted by a massive hook of a nose. Wrinkles spread almost concentrically from that mighty nose outward, like elevation-lines on a geological contour-map. Dinoli radiated energy.

"Ah, Gentlemen, won't you come in

and be seated." Statements, not questions. His voice was a deep black-sounding one, half croak and half boom.

Immediately at Dinoli's right and left hands sat the Agency's four second-level men. Dinoli, of course, occupied the lofty eminence of first-level alone. After the second-level boys came those of the third: Presslie, Cameron, and four others. Ted Kennedy took a seat near Cameron, and Haugen slipped in across the table facing him. Spalding sat to Kennedy's right. He was the only jarring figure in the otherwise neat pyramid, which began with Dinoli, sloped to the four second-level men, and was based on the eight third-level executives.

"We're all here, then," Dinoli said calmly. The clock over his head, just above the upper rim of the picture-window, read 9:00:00. "Gentlemen, I'd like you to meet our new clients, if you will." His clawlike forefinger nudged a button on the elaborate control-panel near his hand.

A rear door opened, and three elegant figures in crisp green full-dress executives' uniforms entered, stiffly erect, conscious of their rank and bearing. They were cold-eyed, hard-looking men.

"Our newest clients," Dinoli announced. "These gentlemen are from the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration Corporation, Ganymede Division."

Despite himself, Ted Kennedy shuddered. The image of crashing cities flickered once again before his eyes...

2

DINOLI was marvelously proud of himself. His beady eyes darted here and there through the room, as he prepared to deliver

himself of the details of his latest coup.

Ted Kennedy couldn't suppress a sharp twinge of admiration for the old battler. Dinoli had clawed himself to first rank in public relations by sheer exertion, coupled with judicious backstabbing.

"Executive Second Level Hubbel of Public Liaison. Executive Second Level Partridge of Public Liaison. Executive Second Level Brewster of the Corporation's Space Expeditionary Command." Dinoli indicated each of the men with a quick birdlike hand gesture.

Kennedy studied them. Hubbel and Partridge were obviously desk men, fifty-ish, well built and on the stout side, both of them deeply and probably artificially tanned. They looked formidably competent.

Brewster was a different item, though. Short and compact, he was a dark-faced little man who stood ramrod-straight, hard cold eyes peering out of a lean, angular face.

Of course! Kennedy thought; *the space explorer!*

"As members of my staff," Dinoli said, "you all know well that anything you may be told in the confines of this room is absolutely confidential. I trust that's understood, gentlemen. Otherwise get out."

Thirteen heads went up-down affirmatively.

"Good. May I say by way of preface that this is perhaps the biggest and most important job Steward & Dinoli has ever handled, perhaps the biggest S & D will ever handle. I needn't add that successful handling of this new account will result in substantial upward alterations in the individual status increments of those men working on it."

DINOLI paused a long moment. "To fill you in on the background, first: Executive Brewster has recently re-

turned from a space journey sponsored by his Corporation. The Major was connected with the Mars expedition, of course, and with the less successful Venus mission that preceded it. Executive Brewster's third, and most recent Corporation-sponsored mission, was to Ganymede—which is, of course, the largest of the moons of our great planetary neighbor Jupiter."

The old man said smoothly, "The existence of this third interplanetary mission is still secret. The poor publicity aroused by the Venus mission was a factor influencing the Corporation to suppress information on the Ganymede trip until its successful conclusion."

A motion-picture screen unreeled itself in the back of the great room. "Executive Brewster has brought us a film of his activities on Ganymede. I'd like all of us to see that film before we go any further in this meeting."

Dinoli signalled and the lights were extinguished. Kennedy turned in his seat to see the screen.

The projector hummed.

A PRODUCTION OF THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND EXPLORATION CORPORATION, GANYMEDE DIVISION

said the opening title, against a pulsing background of red, white, and blue. Credit-lines followed. And then, quite suddenly, Ted Kennedy found himself staring at an alien landscape, oddly quiet, oddly disturbing.

Bleak whiteness confronted him—the whiteness of an almost-endless snowfield, beneath a pale blue sky. Jagged mountain-ranges, rock-bare and snow-topped, loomed in the distance. Clouds of gray-green gas swirled past the eye of the camera.

"This is the surface of Ganymede," came the dark, attractively-resonant voice of Brewster. "As you can see, frozen ammonia-methane snow covers

the ground in most areas. Ganymede, of course, is virtually planetary in size—its diameter is 3200 miles, which is slightly more than that of Mercury. We found the gravitation to be fairly close to that of Earth, incidentally. Ganymede's a heavy-core planet, probably torn out of Jupiter's heart at the time the system was formed."

AS BREWSTER spoke, the camera's eye moved on, and Kennedy's with it: on to examine the fine striations in an outcropping of rock, on to peer down at a tiny determined lichen clinging to the side of an upthrust tongue of basalt.

Suddenly the camera whirled dizzily upward, for a look at the sky. Kennedy was jolted. Jupiter filled a vast segment of the sky, a great heavy ball hanging like a brooding giant just above.

"Ganymede was about 650,000 miles distant from Jupiter at the time of this film's making," Brewster said dryly. "Jupiter takes up quite a chunk of the heavens."

Kennedy stared uneasily at the monstrous, cloud-wrapped planet; its velvety, pearl-gray surface gave hint of unimaginable turbulence deep beneath the outer band of atmosphere. To his relief, the camera finally left the huge world and returned to the Ganymedeian landscape.

For perhaps five minutes more the film drifted on, over the lonely, bleak land. Then eight spacesuited figures appeared, their faces nearly hidden behind breathing-masks, their bodies shrouded by the metal-impregnated suits.

"The members of the expedition," Brewster commented.

The camera panned to a spaceship, standing slim and tall on a bare patch of rock. The ship bore dark green numerals on its shining silver flank.

"The expeditionary ship," Brewster said.

After a survey of the outer skin of the ship from various angles, and a few more glimpses of the spacesuit-clad crewmen, the camera shifted to pick up a strangely cold-looking pool of a greasy liquid.

"One of the Ganymedeian paraffin lakes," said Brewster.

The camera skirted the pool's edge, doubled back through a snowfield, and centered suddenly on four weird figures—four creatures vaguely man-shaped, their faces noseless, their eyes hooded by folds of flesh. They were pale white in color, hairless, virtually naked except for some sort of woven cloth girdle round their middles.

"Natives of Ganymede," Brewster remarked blandly.

Brewster had certainly underplayed it. It took three or four seconds for the effect of his quiet words to make itself known; then Ted Kennedy felt as if he'd been bashed in the stomach by a battering-ram. He had been watching the film intently enough, but superficially; now, suddenly, to have alien life sprung on him...

THE VENUS expedition had been a failure, mechanical difficulties making it nearly impossible for the explorers to cope with the formaldehyde soup that was Venus' atmosphere. But in their short stay, they had definitely verified the fact that there was no animal life on the second planet.

Mars, too, had proved barren. A few lichens, a few podded weeds, but nothing else. Humanity, and Ted Kennedy, had begun to decide that man was alone in the Solar System, and possibly in the universe.

And now, suddenly...

"The Ganymedeans are a primitive people, living in sprawling villages of a few thousand inhabitants each," Brewster said, in a standard travelog

manner. "They cover the entire land mass of Ganymede, which is distributed over three continents. We estimated their numbers at twenty-five million."

Moistening his lips, Kennedy stared at the four alien beings against the alien backdrop of methane snow, and wondered what possible tie-in Dinoli had with all this.

"During our stay," Brewster went on, "we learned the rudiments of their language. It's a fairly simple agglutinating tongue, and our linguists are at work on it now. We discovered that the Ganymedeans have a working clan system, with sharp tribal rivalries, and also that they show neither any particular fear or any liking for us. The expeditionary geologist's report shows that Ganymede is exceptionally rich in radioactive minerals. Thank you."

The film came abruptly to its end with the last word of Brewster's sentence. The light went on, dazzling Kennedy's eyes, and the screen vanished into its recess in the ceiling.

Dinoli leaned forward, his eyes glittering brightly. "I think you begin to see the magnitude of what's unfolding before us, men."

Kennedy squirmed uneasily in his contoured chair as he saw some of the implications. . . . *The expeditionary geologist's report shows that Ganymede is exceptionally rich in radioactive minerals.*

The way he had said it, as a non-sequitur, made the fact seem almost irrelevant. Kennedy had a good ear for seeming irrelevancies; they often turned out to be of critical importance.

DINOLI glanced at the taller and fatter of the two liaison men and said, "Now, Executive Hubbel, will you fill my men in on some of the implications to be drawn from this situation on Ganymede?"

Hubbel coughed ostentatiously. "You've seen alien life on this planet-

sized moon. You've seen also that Ganymede holds exceptional mineral wealth, which our Corporation proposes to mine in the name of the public good, by virtue of our U.N. charter agreement. Well. We've gone to considerable expense developing and outfitting ships to explore space. We're counting on recouping our expenditures on Ganymede, naturally. Partridge?"

The other blinked like a sleepy cougar and said smoothly, "We feel there may be certain difficulties in obtaining mining rights from the Ganymedeans."

Suddenly Kennedy began to understand.

Dinoli grinned triumphantly. "Here's where we come in, boys. There might be conflict with the obstinate Ganymedeans. Some people might call that a war of aggression. Actually, of course, it's sheer necessity. We need what Ganymede has; the Corporation has sunk billions into opening up space for humanity. You understand this. You're all intelligent and clever men."

Partridge said, "Naturally, the public might not sympathize with our plea of necessity; people might think we were imperialistic."

"This impression would naturally have to be counteracted by careful public relations management," Hubbel added thoughtfully, putting a cap on the whole thing.

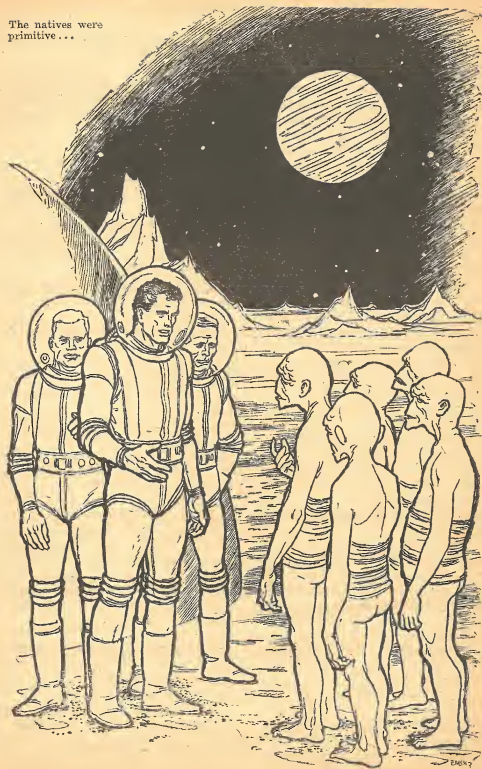
"And we've been chosen to handle it," finished Dinoli.

That was it. That was all there was to it.

Kennedy kept his face blank of emotional reaction—the Agency Mask, Marge called it privately.

"We plan an intensive, world-wide blanketing," Dinoli said. "These gentlemen will be working closely with us at all times. Specific target dates have already been set up. There's a date on which first knowledge of the existence of life on Ganymede will be

The natives were
primitive...



given to the public—fairly close, I can tell you—and there's a terminal date on which the occupation force will have to be put down to assist the Corporation. Between those dates, it'll be our responsibility to handle the campaign."

Dinoli leaned back, grinning expansively. "Our constitution provides that no more than four men may be second-level at any one time in our organization. However, we're a flexible group. For the duration of this campaign, those of you who are third-level will draw second-level salaries, without formal advancement in rank. You second-level boys will get salary boosts as well. As for you, Dave Spalding: you'll draw third-level pay, while officially remaining a fourth-level man. Whether these boosts become permanent depends largely on the success of the campaign." The old man's eyes traveled down the rows. "Is everything perfectly clear?"

THERE WERE thirteen affirmative nods.

"Well, then. You four"—he indicated the second-level men—"will serve as general coordinators for the project. The actual intensive work will be carried out by the third-level people, plus you, Spalding."

Dinoli smiled glacially. "This contract takes precedence over any others we may have signed. Your second-level supervisors will discuss with you the advisability of turning your current projects over to a fourth-level man."

Dinoli rose. "We'll work as a tight little unit on this. And we'll prove to the Corporation that they haven't made a mistake in choosing S & D. Won't we, men?"

Thirteen nods.

"Well." The single word was a clear-cut dismissal.

They filed out slowly. Ted Kennedy left quietly, deep in concentration that allowed him to avoid consid-

ering the matter of ethics. There would be time for that later.

What will Marge say, he wondered. He thought of the simple blankfaced creatures from the film, and of Marge's boundless sympathy for the unfortunates of the world.

3

THE WARM, cheerful, expensive odor of real food filtered through the Kennedy household. Marge bustled about the kitchen, setting the table, while the autochef prepared the meal. They were having shoulder steak, mashed potatoes, garden peas. Nothing on the menu was synthetic.

"Supper's almost ready," Marge called.

Kennedy drained the remainder of his pre-dinner cocktail, scratched the cat behind his ears, and flipped a switch on the master control panel of the sound system, cutting out the three living-room speakers and switching the output to the dining-room. The playful recorders of Bach's Second Brandenburg came piping out of the other room, accompanied by Marge's lilting, somewhat off-pitch humming.

Kennedy entered the bathroom and jammed his hands into the handkleen socket. The day's grime peeled away. He caught a glimpse of his face—pale, too thin, wrinkles already beginning to form around the eyes, even at thirty-two.

The handkleen's gentle purr died away. He shook his hands in the automatic drying gesture, pointless but habitual, and crossed over into the kitchen-cum-dining-room.

"It's Spalding I don't understand," Kennedy said, abruptly re-opening a conversation of an hour before. "Here he is, a fourth-level man jerked up to third just to work on this project, and he's sour as hell on it."

"Maybe Dave isn't interested in the project."

"Maybe—*huh?* What does *that* have to do with it? Any p-r man worth his pay can damn well *get* interested in any sort of project. You think I cared about the good folk of Nebraska when I took on that Bauxite deal?"

"No."

"Exactly. And yet within two weeks," Kennedy said, "I was so wrapped up in that project, so identified with it, that it actually *hurt* to be pulled off it and put into this. Can you understand that?"

MARGE SMILED sweetly. "I think I can grasp the general picture. But you say Dave's not anxious to work on the new contract? There must be some good reason for that."

"It's the same reason that keeps him down in fourth-level, when he should be in third." Kennedy attacked his meat fiercely, and after a moment went on. "He doesn't have the right spirit. Talent, yes—but that intangible *extra*, no. And don't think Dinoli doesn't know that. I wouldn't be surprised if Dave was put on this thing just as a test—either he delivers the goods now, with third-level responsibilities, or out he goes."

"I've always thought Dave was too sensitive for p-r work," Marge said.

"Implying I'm not a sensitive man?"

She shrugged. "Your potatoes are getting cold, darling. Of course you're sensitive—but in a different way. You know?"

"No. But drop the subject." Kennedy couldn't see his wife's fondness for Spalding, and regularly tried to avoid the necessity of inviting Dave to their house.

"I suppose Alf Haugen's wild with enthusiasm over the new contract," Marge said.

"Alf's a company-first man. If they gave him the job of selling humanity

on turning cannibal, he'd take it on—if they boosted his salary. Naturally he's enthusiastic; he'll do anything Dinoli tells him to do."

"You haven't told me what this contract's about yet, you know," Marge said quietly.

Kennedy paused in mid-chew. "It's top confidential."

She pouted. "You've done classified work before. Have I ever let it spill?"

"This is different," he said slowly. "This absolutely *must not* leak. I can't, Marge."

"All right," Marge said. "*Don't* tell me. Laurie Haugen will. That blabbermouth can't keep quiet for..."

"Laurie won't know. Alf won't tell her." Even as he said it, he knew how foolish the words sounded. He shook his head bitterly. "Marge, can't you take a straight *no*?"

"If I have to," she said, sighing. She began to clear away the dishes. Kennedy could tell from the sudden angularity of her motions that she was angry.

HE SHUT his eyes for a moment, thinking, looking for the strength to tell her. They had been married eight years—were married on the evening of his college graduation, in 2036. He held a Bachelor of Communications from Northwestern, and finishing first in his graduating class, had eagerly accepted the bid to come East and work for Steward & Dinoli as a fifth-level man.

Eight years, and he had worked up to third-level, with-second perhaps just a few years away. He had tried to be perfectly frank with Marge on all matters, and she loved and respected him for it. But now...

He was damned either way. There'd be a wedge between them if he refused to tell her, and perhaps a wider gulf if he did. He began to sweat.

"Come here, Marge," he said in a

hoarse voice. "Sit down, I'll tell you about this new contract."

She sat opposite him. "Well?"

"There's been a space expedition to Ganymede; that's one of the moons of Jupiter, you know. It's almost big enough to be a planet itself. Well, they've found people on Ganymede—intelligent people."

"How wonderful! What are they like? Have you seen pictures yet? Are they..."

"Wait a second," Kennedy said, his voice dull. "They also found radioactive ores there; the place is literally packed with minerals Earth needs desperately. Only the natives refuse to permit any mining operations whatsoever; some tribal nonsense, I guess. So the Corporation may have some trouble. If there's armed resistance, they may have to ask the U. N. Army to intervene in their behalf."

"It's a matter of the public good; the natives are not using their minerals, and Earth's entire economy is based on them. So S & D was called in to handle a publicity campaign. On the surface, you see, it might look pretty nasty—that the Corporation was greedily aggressing, attacking primitive creatures, and so forth. Naturally we can't have that kind of publicity. So here's where we come in—to smooth everything over, make it clear that this is a matter of simple need, and..."

He stopped suddenly, catching the expression that flew momentarily across Marge's face.

"You dreamed about this last night," she said in a soft, barely audible voice. "About war. Funny; I didn't believe in things like this. Until now."

"Marge!"

"You said it would be a terrible war. Innocent people slaughtered. Remember?"

"It won't be a war, Marge; they'll just occupy the place. Peacefully. We can't let all those valuable ores just rot away there, you know."

SHE LOOKED at him strangely. "Suppose the natives object to this occupation. What then?"

"Why—why, how can they? They're just primitive alien beings. I don't even think they even have explosives, let alone atomics."

"None of you have any consciences, do you?" Marge asked. "Except Dave Spalding; he's the only one that seems to be upset by this. None of the rest of you are. You just see bonuses and status increments." Her voice was sharp now. "Alf Haugen's probably planning to trade in his car for a custom model; that's all he thinks of. And you, Ted—do you think at all?"

She rose from the table, broke away from him suddenly, and ran off into the darkened livingroom.

He tiptoed after her. In the darkness, he made out a dim form lying on the couch that converted each night into their bed. Marge was sobbing quietly.

"Marge," he whispered. "Don't carry on this way. It's just a job; that's all—just a job. I'm not going to be killing Ganymedeans. I won't be carrying a gun. No matter what I say or think or do, it's still going to happen. Why take it out on me? Why hurt *us*?"

The sobbing stopped; and he knew she was staring sightlessly at the darkness, battling within herself. Finally she sat up. "All right, darling. I'm taking this whole thing much too seriously, I guess." She tried to smile.

IT WAS PRETTY much of a lame evening. They had had tentative plans to visit neighbors down the road, but Marge was puffy-eyed from tears, and Kennedy had fallen into a brooding mood. He phoned and begged off, claiming work that *had* to be done this very evening.

There were some awkward moments while he helped her put away the dinner dishes; twice, his eyes met hers and he flinched. He felt very tired.

Ted Kennedy had long been proud

of a wife with a mind of her own. Marge's independent thinking was one of the things he loved her for. But it could also get somewhat burdensome. *Perhaps if we'd had children*, he speculated. *Maybe she wouldn't be so touchy about Causes and Movements.* But they had never had children, and probably never would.

They listened to music a while—Kennedy only half-listening to the Boccherini quintet Marge loved so, and the Schubert octet. She was very fond of chamber music, and ordinarily, Kennedy was too—but tonight it all seemed foolish.

At five to eight he suggested, "Let's watch video, eh, Marge? We haven't done that in ages."

"Anything you like, dear," she said mechanically.

He dimmed the lights and switched the set on. It was a new set—a forty-eight inch job installed in the wall opposite the couch—a social necessity. They hardly ever used it.

A vortex of colored light swirled dizzily for an instant, and then the screen cleared. They had tuned in at the tail end of a program, and a gay, sprightly commercial was on. Kennedy found the dancing stick-figures offensive.

The program ended. The time-bleep bleeped and a deep voice said, "Eight P. M., Eastern Standard Time. From coast to coast. Levree Radionic Watches keep you on time, *all* the time. No gears, no springs."

Again the screen showed the color vortex. Another voice said, "The program normally scheduled for this hour has been cancelled to bring you a special Government information program."

"Let me change the station," Kennedy said. "This'll just be dull junk; we need something funny tonight."

She grasped his arm tightly. "No. Let's see what this is, first. It may be important."

AN ANNOUNCER appeared, white-toothed, neatly tanned, his mus-

tache stained red and meticulously clipped. "Good evening," he said. "This is Nat Howell from your network newsroom, bringing to you a special program covering the big news story of the day, the year, and the century—the discovery of living intelligent beings on another world of this solar system."

Kennedy stiffened. *Already? They're releasing it so soon?*

"We must have missed the news bulletins," Marge said.

"...was revealed by the President at 4:45 this afternoon, at a special press conference. The news electrified a world long fascinated by the possible existence of life on other planets. Details of the expedition are still coming in. However, it's our privilege to present the first public showing of a special film taken by members of the Ganymede expedition!"

The film was the same one Kennedy had seen in Dinoli's office. This time, though, a slick professional commentary had been dubbed in.

When the film reached the point at which the Ganymedeans natives appeared, he heard Marge utter a little gasp. "Why, they're like children!" she said. "Defenseless, naked, creatures! And these are the beings we're going to make war on?"

"We're just going to occupy their territory," Kennedy said stubbornly. "And probably administer it for them. In the long run they'll be a lot better off for it."

"Unless they don't *want* to be better off," she said.

Kennedy shook his head. The public knew, now; come tomorrow, the behind-the-scenes campaign would begin in the offices of S & D. What shall it profit a man, he wondered bleakly, if he getteth promoted to second-level, and loseth his own wife in the process?

He pulled her tight against him, and after a few moments of hesitation she turned from the screen to him, with

what he hoped was unsimulated warmth.

4

THE NEXT day was the fourth of May, 2044, and the first day of intensive work on the Ganymede Contract.

The dramatic newsbreak of the night before had been the universal topic of discussion. It seemed; every telefax sheet, every news commentator, every cab-driver, had his own opinions on the revelation. Kennedy thought of this time as a kind of primordially formless era, before the shrewd minds of Steward & Dinoli went to work shaping a clearcut public opinion from the present chaos.

They met in the office of Ernie Watsinski, second-level public-relations man, and, incidentally, Dinoli's son-in-law. Watsinski was a tall stoop-shouldered man of thirty-eight, weak-eyed with a dome-like skull covered sparsely with sandy hair. Physically, he was easy to overlook; but he had a razor-keen mind and an astonishing capacity for quick decisions. He had made second-level at the age of thirty-one, marrying Dinoli's daughter the following year.

He affected twentieth-century functional by way of office furniture, and as a result his private room looked severely ascetic. He perched on the back of a lemon-colored desk chair and glanced around the room. All eight of the third-level men were present, plus Dave Spalding.

"How many of you saw the big newsbreak last night?" he asked. "All of you? Fine. That's what we like to see here. I worked that program up myself, you know. With aid from Hubbel and Partridge."

He slouched back in the chair, crossing his long spidery legs. "Your colleagues of the sixth and seventh level have been running gallups all morning. Seems almost everyone saw that

spot last night, and the early gallups show tremendous interest focussed on this Ganymede thing. Okay. The interest exists; it's our job to channel it. That clear and pellucid?"

Without waiting for response, he continued. "You've all been relieved of your present assignments. You'll be working directly under me; the other three second-level men will be operating peripherally in the same general area, but the key work on this contract is going to come out of this office. Any questions? Good. Now: let's toss this around for half an hour or so. I want a suggestion for a broad approach. Kennedy?"

"I have an idea or two on our general slant, if that hasn't already been determined."

"It hasn't. That's what we're here to do. Go on."

"Well," Ted Kennedy said carefully, "My wife and I saw the program last night. Her reaction to the sight of the Ganymedeans was *pity*. They aroused her maternal protective instincts. I'd suggest we play to this. Ernie. The poor childlike innocent Ganymedeans who have to be taken over by our occupation forces for their own good."

"Shrewd point, Kennedy. Let's kick that around a little. Haugen?"

"I'M DEAD opposed." Alf Haugen said thickly. He twined his fleshy fingers together. "My wife reacted pretty much the same way Kennedy's did. She even thought they were *cute*. The gallups will probably tell you that was a universal reaction. Okay. We follow Kennedy's plan and build the Ganymedeans up as babes in the woods. What happens if they decide to fight back? Suppose there's a massacre bloodier than all get-out when we try to occupy Ganymede?"

"Amplify," Watsinski said.

"What I'm getting at is this: it may be necessary to gun those creatures down by droves. We can't hide that completely from the public, Ernie; and

The "hostile
aliens" would
attack.



the outcry will be fantastic. We may even have a revolution on our hands. The government's certainly going to be in trouble."

Watsinski narrowed his eyes until they were mere tiny slits, and stroked the side of his long curved nose. At length he said, "Kennedy, you see the flaw in your proposition?"

Shamefaced, Ted Kennedy nodded. Haugen had deflated his idea quickly and sensibly. They would have to prepare the public for the worst.

Watsinski glanced around the table. "Before we move on, is there anyone else who wants to argue to Kennedy's point?"

Slowly Dave Spalding raised his hand. "I do. I think it's wrongheaded to go into this expecting a bloody massacre. The occupation ought to be as peaceful as possible; and if we build up a publicity blanket of love for the Ganymedeans then it damn well *better* be peaceful."

There was an instant of silence. Watsinski said, "Spalding, you're only a fourth-level man, and we can make allowances. But we try to shape public opinion here. We *don't* try to shape the doings of the corporation to fit the kind of atmosphere we've created. *They* happen to employ *us*. This kind of thing has hurt you before, Spalding, and it's likely to hurt you again if you don't get your thinking clarified."

The young fourth-level man went very pale at the rebuke. His nostrils flickered in momentary anger, but said nothing.

Watsinski said, "Well. We can go ahead, then. Kick it around some more, fellows. I'm listening."

Lloyd Presslie got the floor. "We could take the opposite track. Paint the Ganymedeans as monsters, alien demons from an ice-bound planet. Wipe this damn mother-love out of the picture, just in case we have to come down on them hard."

Watsinski was smiling, showing yellowish, uneven teeth. "I like," he said

gently. "I like. Let's kick it around some more, shall we?"

KENNEDY ate lunch that day, as he had every day of his eight-year employment at Steward & Dinoli, in the Agency's cafeteria on Floor Ten. He twitched his yellow status-card from the protective folder in his wallet, slapped it against the translucent plastic plate in the dispensary wall, and waited for it to be scanned.

A moment later, the standard Thursday third-level lunch issued from a slot further down in the dispensary. Algae steak, synthetic vegmix, a cup of pale, but undeniably real coffee. Dinoli had never been very liberal with his lunches.

Just as he started to head for the third-level table in the front of the cafeteria, someone nudged his elbow, nearly spilling his tray. He turned, annoyed.

Dave Spalding stood behind him, smiling apologetically.

Kennedy glanced at the tray Spalding held. The fourth-level menu was something he had already thankfully forgotten, and he was not happy to see it again. Weak soup, chlorella patties, protein sauce. Synthetic caffeine drink.

"What is it, Dave? You want to talk to me?"

Spalding nodded. "Unless you've already made plans for lunch. We can take one of the tables at the side."

Shrugging, Ted Kennedy agreed. Perhaps Spalding wanted to ask his advice. As a third-level man, it was his responsibility to help any lower-rated man who sought him out.

There were a few small tables arranged at the far side of the cafeteria for meetings such as this. Ordinarily one ate with one's own level, but tables were provided to care for inter-level lunches as well.

Kennedy felt ill at ease. Spalding, at twenty-eight, was Marge's age—four years his junior. When Zack Harris had left the Agency for independent

press-agenting work a year ago, Spalding should have entered third level, instead, Lloyd Presslie had been jumped over him into third. "What's on your mind?" Kennedy asked.

"The Ganymede Contract. I want to know how you feel about it."

"A job," Kennedy said. "Possibly a quite challenging one."

"Just a job? A challenge?"

"Should it be anything else?"

"It's the biggest sell since the days of Judas, and you know it as—as *pellucidly* as I do," Spalding said quietly, acidly mocking Ernie Watsinski's favorite word. "The whole thing is simply a naked grab of strategic territory."

"**D**OES IT matter," Kennedy asked, "which particular commodity we're selling? If you want to start drawing ethical boundaries, you'd have to ring the whole Agency. I've had plenty of jobs just as—well, shady—as this one. So have you. That Federated Bauxite thing I was on, just to take one example..."

"So you had to convince some people in Nebraska that their water supply wasn't being polluted. I suppose that's small enough so you can swallow it down. But Ganymede's too big. We're selling two worlds—ours and theirs. Ted, I want out."

"Out of the Contract?"

"Out of the Agency," Spalding said. Kennedy chewed silently for a moment. "Why are you telling me all this?" he asked after a while.

"I have to tell someone, Ted; and I feel I can trust you. I think you're basically on my side. I know Marge is. She can conyince you."

"Keep Marge out of this discussion," Kennedy said, forcing back his anger. Spalding was only a wild-eyed kid, despite his twenty-eight years. Some of them never grew up, never learned that life was essentially a bunch of compromises within compromises. And you had to do the best you can. "You'd

really leave the Agency over this Contract?"

"I've been building up to it a long time. We've been handed one sell after another, but this one's too big. It's lousy, Ted. I tried to play along with the others; but they had to go and yank me out of fourth level to work on this one. Why?"

"Maybe they wanted to see how you'd react."

"Well, they're going to see," Spalding snapped. "I tried to put in my pitch when we met with Watsinski this morning. It was your point I was defending, too, even if you gave up. But you see how I got slapped down. Policy was set a long time ago, on this, Ted."

"Listen, Dave, stay here a while—a week, two, maybe a month. Don't rush into anything." Kennedy wondered why he was going to all this trouble persuading Spalding to stay in a place he obviously hated and was ill-qualified for. "Think about this move for a while. Once you quit Dinoli, you're sunk for good."

Spalding's eyelids drooped broodingly. After a long silence he said, "Maybe you have something there. I'll stick for two weeks more. Just to see if I can bend this Contract into a better direction, though. If nothing works out, I'm leaving."

"That's a sensible attitude."

SPALDING grinned. "And you're an Agency man for life. I suppose? Solidly sold on the virtues of Lou Dinoli?"

"He's no saint," Kennedy said. "Neither am I. It doesn't pay to aim for sainthood these days. But I'll keep my job; and I'll be able to live with my conscience afterward."

"I wonder about that," Spalding murmured.

"What's that?"

"Nothing," Spalding said quickly. "Just shooting my mouth off again. It's an old habit of mine."

The gong sounded, ending lunch

hour. Spalding touched Kennedy's arm in a gesture of gratitude and scampered away dumping his empty tray in the big hopper.

More slowly, Kennedy followed him, and abstractedly let the plastic tray slide down into the washer's maw. *I have no illusions*, he told himself firmly. *I'm not a fanatic Agency man like Haugen.*

I think some of the things we do are rotten. I think this Contract's rotten. But there just isn't any percentage in standing up and saying so. The guy who stands up only gets slapped down twice as hard and twice as fast.

He felt a sudden deep surge of pity for Dave Spalding. This was no world for a man with a conscience. Kennedy headed back toward his desk to begin sketching out the Ganymede campaign.

5

MAY MOVED along, and the Steward & Dinoli organization made the transition from its previous batch of contracts to the one all-encompassing job they were now committed to. A fourth-level kid named Furman relieved Ted Kennedy of the Federated Bauxite Portfolio; from that moment on, he was a full-time member of the Ganymede Project.

Watsinski was his immediate superior—the idea-coordinator of the project. Each of the other three second-level men had his own special responsibility in the affair—Kauderer handling space purchasing; McDermott governmental liaison and United Nations lobbying; Poggioli opinion-sampling and trend-testing. But these were essentially subsidiary enterprises; the central ideological flow from channelled through Watsinski.

Watsinski's team consisted of nine: Kennedy, Haugen, Spalding, Presslie, Cameron, Richardson, Fleischman, Lund, and Whitman. These were the

men who would sell Ganymede to the people of Earth.

No one, not even Watsinski, seemed in any great hurry to get the project rolling. They spent the first few days just doodling ideas and filing them, without even bringing them up for discussion.

There were several target dates to be kept in mind. Kennedy scribbled them all carefully in his personal notebook as soon as they filtered down from above.

MAY 21, 2044—first big publicity push

JULY 8—beginning of transition in public feeling; prepare for unsympathetic depiction of Ganymedeans

SEPTEMBER 17—intensification of program; building toward climax of operation

SEPTEMBER 22—Corporation will begin to ask U. N. to consider giving it aid in case necessary; underscore through S & D

OCTOBER 11—Climactic incident will send Corporation before U. N. with a plea for help

OCTOBER 17—(optimum desired time) United Nations decision to occupy Ganymede to safeguard the rights of Corporation

Kennedy refrained from letting Marge see the time-table; he knew what her immediate reaction would be.

It would be pretty much like that of Dave Spalding, the day the memorandum had been sent around. Spalding's desk had been moved out of the fourth-level quarters, and now he worked near Haugen and Kennedy. He looked up when the sealed envelope was deposited on the corner of his desk, ripped it open, skimmed through it.

"Well, here it is. The blueprint for conquest."

Alf Haugen dropped his memorandum to the shining surface of his desk and glanced at Spalding, a troubled look on his heavy face.

"What the hell you mean by that?"

TROUBLE bristled a moment in the office; smoothly Kennedy said, "Always the cynic, eh, Dave? You'd think the Ganymedeans were going to get trampled into the dust."

"Well, we..."

"You have to hand it to Dinoli," Kennedy kept going unstopably. "He can work out a timetable six-seven months in advance and judge every trend so well we don't need to amend the schedule as much as twenty-four hours."

"It's a trick of the trade," Haugen said. "Dinoli's a shark. A real shark. Lord, I respect that man!"

Kennedy efficiently folded the memorandum and tucked it away. He left his desk and crossed the floor to Spalding's. Leaning down with both hands on the other's desk, he put his face close to Spalding's and said, "Dave, do you have a free minute? I'm going to Library Deck for a pickup, and I need a hand carrying the stuff."

"Why don't you ring for a porter?"

The tip of Spalding's shoe protruded from under his desk. Kennedy found it with his own foot and pressed down hard. "I don't trust those boys; I'd like you to help me out."

Spalding looked puzzled, but he shrugged and nodded. When they were out of the third-level area and in the corridor, Kennedy gripped him tightly by the arm and said in a low voice, "That 'blueprint for conquest' gag was a little out of place, Dave. It wasn't called for."

"Wasn't it?"

"That's neither here nor there. You're not expected to make un-Agency cracks in the third-level area. If Haugen had reported you; he'd have been within his rights."

A cold smile crossed Spalding's face. "Is it against the law to speak out against a nasty business deal?"

"Yes," Kennedy said. "Either you stick with it, and keep your mouth shut, or you get out. One or the other.

What happened to your talk of quitting?"

"I'm sticking here because I need the money. I'm drawing third-level pay now, and that's good cabbage. A few more months of Papa Dinoli's shekels, and I'll have enough of a nest-egg to quit and do what I want to do. What I *really* want to do." Spalding's eyes glittered. "Fight cynicism with cynicism. It's the only way."

Kennedy blinked. He said nothing.

"Now," Spalding went on. "That library pickup. Is it legit, or did you just cook it up so you could give me a word of advice?"

"I just cooked it up," Kennedy admitted.

"I thought so. Mind if I get back to work, then?"

Spalding smiled and ducked past him. "You louse," Kennedy said quietly to himself, at Spalding's retreating back.

HALF AN hour later he was at his place around the table in Ernie Watsinski's office. Watsinski sat perfectly quietly, a lanky uncouth figure draped over a chair, waiting for the group to assemble.

"Today, gentlemen, is the eleventh of May," he began, in his thin voice. "It's precisely one week since we last met in this room. It's also—I take it you've all seen the timesheet that was circulated this morning; if you haven't, please raise hands—ah, good. As I say, it's also precisely ten days till the beginning of the public phase of our campaign."

"Now I've given you this week to think things out, to look at the big picture and fit yourself into it. You know that we at S&D regard public relations work as artistic creation. You're shaping an esthetic whole. The beauty of a fully-developed opinion pattern is like the beauty of the Mona Lisa or a Rembrandt or a Beethoven symphony. If any of you men don't *feel* this Ganymede thing with all

you've got, I appreciate it if you'd let me know right here and now, or else later in privacy. This has to be real. It has to be *sincere*, gentlemen."

Watsinski seemed to have worked up genuine passion over his rhapsody. His eyes were glossy with the beginnings of tears.

"Okay, gentlemen, let's get to work," Watsinski said suddenly, in an entirely different tone of voice. "At our last meeting we decided on our general pattern of approach—that we take into account the distinct possibility of strong action on Ganymede and therefore build the Ganymedeans up as unsympathetic types. I guess you've all been thinking about ways and means of doing this. Richardson, start talking."

Richardson ran his hands through his thinning hair and said, "I've been thinking of three or four separate multilevel approaches to this thing, Ernie, but I won't throw them all out on the floor right now. The basic handle is a kiddie-approach. Kiddies and women. Men don't form their own opinions, anyway. I propose that we assault this thing by filtering anti-Ganymede stuff into the kiddie shows and the afternoon women-slanted videocasts. I've drawn up a brief on how to go about it, listing fifteen selected shows and the angle of leverage on each one. You want me to go through the brief now, or file it for afterwards?"

WATSINSKI stirred restlessly. "Better save it for now, Claude. We're still searching for the broad patterns. Detailed implementation comes later."

They went around the table. Alf Haugen had developed a slippery idea for feeding pro-Ganymedeans stuff into overseas video shows and newspapers, carefully picking the countries, selecting the ones least in favor in the United States at the moment. Then, via a sim-

ple contrast-switch, local opinion could be pyramided on the basic proposition, *If they're for it, we're gonna be agin it!*

Watsinski liked that. Fleischman then offered his ideas—a typically Fleischmanoid product, many-layered and obscure—for grabbing public opinion simultaneously at the college and kindergarten level and letting babes and late adolescents serve as propagandists. Watsinski went for that, too.

Then it was Ted Kennedy's turn. He tugged nervously at his collar and put his briefcase before him on the table.

"I've sketched out a plan that substantially dovetails with the ones we've just heard, Ernie; it can be used alongside any or all of them."

"Let's have it."

"In brief, it's this: we need a strawman, a dummy to set up and kick over. Something to engage local sympathies firmly and finally."

Watsinski was nodding. Kennedy moistened his lips. He said, "At the moment the only human beings on Ganymede are a couple of dozen Corporation spacemen and scientists. I don't think there's a woman or a child on the place. Where's the human interest? Where's the pathos when we highlight them against the Ganymedeans? Who gives much of a damn about a bunch of Corporation scientists?"

"No," Kennedy went on. "Here's my suggestion: we start disseminating word of a colony of Earthmen on Ganymede. Volunteers; a couple of hundred chosen people, brave self-sacrificing men, women, and children. Naturally there isn't any colony there; the Corporation wouldn't send noncombatants into a militarily unsettled area like Ganymede. But the public doesn't have to know that. If we make the doings of the colony consistent, if we start believing in it ourselves—then the public will believe in it too. And once we've got a firm fisthold on their

sympathies, we can do anything with them!"

KENNEDY had hardly finished speaking when half a dozen hands were in the air.

Presslie got the floor and said, "It's a natural! Why, then we can follow through by having the Ganymedeans *wipe out* this colony. It's a sure bet for engaging sympathy in any sort of necessary police action! Innocent women and children perishing, flames, blood—why, this is just the handle we need! Of course I can suggest some modifications, but those can come later."

Watsinski nodded. "Kennedy seems to have hit on a sharp idea. I'm going to suggest it to Dinoli as our basic line of approach, and build all the other plans around it. Good work, Kennedy. Lund, let's hear from you, now. I want to kick this all the way round the table."

6

LATER THAT day, Kennedy was working at his desk when the phone chimed. He snatched it up and heard Watsinski's dry voice say, "Kennedy? Ernie here. Can you come over to my place for a few minutes?"

Watsinski was waiting for him when he came in. The second-level man wore a severely funereal business-suit and a glistering red wig.

"I took your suggestion up with Dinoli," he said. "The old man loved it. He thinks it's great. So did Kauderer, McDermott, and Poggioli."

"I'm glad to hear it went over, Ernie."

Watsinski nodded. "It went over. Dinoli spent half of lunch talking to Bullard—he's Mr. Big over at the Corporation, you know. They were lining out the strategy. Dinoli is using your plan as the core of the whole thing."

Watsinski leaned back and permitted some warmth to enter his face. "I've always liked you, Ted. I think you've got the stuff for second-level. You know what it takes? It takes dogged persistence plus off-beat ingenuity. That isn't an everyday combination of traits; we've got guys who come up with off-beat ideas—Lund, for instance, and that kid Spalding—but they don't have the push to implement their notions. And then we get the kind like Haugen—the solid pluggers who never make mistakes, but who never come up with anything new or fresh either. Well, we need both types down on third-level. But second-level takes something else. I think you have it too, Ted."

"It's good to hear you say that, Ernie. I know you don't go soaping people up."

Watsinski inclined his domed head forward. "This is strictly off the record, Ted. But Frank Poggioli is talking about pulling out of S&D and taking a big network job in video. If Poggioli goes, someone'll have to be kicked up to second-level to fill the vacancy. Dinoli took that up with me this morning, too. It's between Haugen and Presslie and you. I'm putting my support back of you; that business this morning helped me make up my mind."

"Thanks, Ernie. Thanks." Kennedy wondered why Watsinski was bothering to tell him all this.

WATSINSKI let his eyes droop quietly closed, and when he opened them again they seemed to be veiled. "Okay. Enough if-talk, Ted; I just wanted you to know where you stand in the Agency. I hate to see a man feel insecure when he's in a good position."

Watsinski frowned. "You know, there are guys in this Agency who don't have the right spirit, and I wish we could root them the hell out of here."

Guys who aren't loyal. Guys who don't have the right ideas. Guys whose minds are full of cockeyed garbage served up by antisocial creeps who fight anything that's good and clean and pure. You know these guys better than I do; you see them through clearer focus. As a prospective second-level man you ought to start thinking about these guys and how we can weed them out. You ought to let me know if you spot any thinking of a negative type. Okay, Ted?"

Kennedy felt a sudden chill. *So that's what he wants*, he thought. *He wants me to spy for him and finger the Spaldings who have qualms about the Contract.*

"I see what you mean, Ernie. I'll think about it."

"Sure. Don't rush it or you'll crush it. But I know definitely there are some antisocial elements in our team, and I want to clean them out. So does Dinoli."

The office phone chimed. Watsinski picked it up, listened for a long moment, finally said, "He's here right now, Lou. I'm filling him in. Okay, Chief."

He hung up.

"That was Dinoli. Well, let me get to the main pitch, Ted: we're using the plan you threw out this morning. We're going to invent a colony on Ganymede; in October we're going to have the Ganymedeans launch a savage attack on that colony, and then the Corporation will ask the U. N. to step in and save them. Dinoli wants you to be in charge of developing material on this colony. You'll have sole charge; in essence you'll be doing second-level type work. You can name your own staff; pick out anybody you like from third or fourth level as your assistant."

"Right now?"

"It would help," Watsinski said.

Kennedy was silent a moment. He pulled a cigaret from an ignitopak,

waited for it to glow into life, and with calm deliberation sucked smoke into his lungs.

They were setting him up in a big way. On the surface, it was a heart-warming vote of confidence in his abilities—but Kennedy knew enough about the workings of Steward & Dinoli to realize that the upper levels never operated merely on the surface alone. They always played a deep game.

They were putting him into a big post in exchange for something—information, no doubt. They knew the Ganymede Contract was a hot item, and they wanted to avoid any leaks by weeding out possible defectors like Spalding. Possibly they had their eye on Spalding already and were simply waiting for Kennedy to confirm their suspicions.

Well, Ted Kennedy thought, *I won't play their game.*

Kennedy stared bluntly at Watsinski's thin shrewd face. "Okay. I've picked my man. Dave Spalding."

For just a fraction of a second Watsinski looked as if Kennedy had kicked him in the teeth. Then control reasserted itself and Watsinski said, in a mellow even tone, "Okay, Ted, I'll see what I can do to expedite your request. That'll be all for now. Keep up the good work."

THAT NIGHT, when Marge asked him how things had gone during the day, Kennedy said shortly, "Pretty fair. Watsinski called me in and said I have a good shot at second-level. They gave me some special work to do."

She dropped a pale white onion into the cocktail, kissed him, and handed him the drink. He took it and said, "Dave Spalding's going to be working directly with me. And we're actually going to be handling the core of the whole project."

"I hope you and Dave will get along

better now. It would be too bad if you couldn't cooperate on your work."

Kennedy smiled. "I think we will. I picked him as my assistant myself."

He felt relaxed and untense. This was the way life ought to be: a good job, a good drink, good music playing, your good wife fixing a good supper inside. And after supper some good company, an evening of relaxation, and then a good night in bed. He closed his eyes, listening to the jubilant trumpets of the Purcell Ode on the phonograph, and stroked the cat gently with his free hand.

Spalding had taken the news pretty well, he thought. Kennedy had met with him at 2 o'clock, shortly after confirmation of the new arrangement had come through from Watsinski, and Spalding had seemed interested and almost enthusiastic about the fictional Ganymede colony they were about to create. There had been no coldness between them, no raising of knotty moral issues, for which Kennedy was thankful.

Instead, Spalding had immediately begun producing a wealth of ideas, characters, incidents, jumping at the idea with boyish vigor.

Kennedy himself felt a sudden welling of enthusiastic interest. He knew what Watsinski had been talking about, when he referred to the esthetic nature of public-relations work. It could be a work of art; he and Spalding would give life to a colony of people, endow them with talents and hopes and strivings, interest the people of the world in their hardships and privations and courage.

The music swelled to a climax. Kennedy thought of old Purcell, back there in seventeenth-century England, painstakingly jotting fish-hooks onto a sheet of grimy paper. There it was, he thought: an artistic creation. Something that hadn't existed the morning before Purcell inked in his first clef, and something that now belonged to the world.

It was almost the same way with this Ganymede colony he and Spalding would design. Men and women would be able to enter into the life of that colony just as he entered into the life of the musical composition being played. It was almost in a mood of exaltation that Kennedy entered the dining-room at Marge's call.

SHE SMILED at him. "I must have made that cocktail too strong."

"Three-and-a-half to one, or I'm no judge of proportions."

"I thought so—but you look so different! Warm and relaxed, Ted."

"And therefore I must be drunk. Because I couldn't possibly be happy and relaxed when I'm sober. Well, I hate to disappoint you, Marge I *am* sober. And happy."

"Of course you are, darling. I..."

"And the reason I'm happy," Ted Kennedy continued, "is only partly because Watsinski said I stood a good chance of making second-level when Poggioli pulls out. That's a minor thing. I'm happy because I have a chance to participate in something real and vital and exciting, and Dave along with me. You know what I'll be doing?"

She smiled. "I didn't want to ask. You're usually so touchy about your work when I ask things."

"Well, I'll tell you. Dave and I are going to invent a colony on Ganymede, with people and everything."

He went on to explain in detail what the colony would be like; how he had come to think of the idea; how Watsinski and the others had reacted when he put it forth. He concluded by letting her in on what was really classified material: he told her of Presslie's concluding suggestion, that the colony would be "destroyed" to serve as provocation for the intended United Nations occupation.

"There," he finished. "Isn't that neat? Complete, well-rounded, carefully built up. It..."

He stopped. The glow of happiness winked out in an instant. Marge was staring at him with an expression that he could only interpret as one of horror.

"You're serious about this, aren't you?" she asked.

"Of course I am. What's wrong?"

"This whole terrible charade—this fake slush—being used to grab the sympathies of the world. What a gigantic grisly hoax! And you're *proud* of it!"

"JUST TAKE IT on its own terms,"

he said tightly, "as a creative effort; don't drag moral confusions into it. You always have to cobweb things up by dragging in preachery."

"You *can't* take anything on its own terms, Ted: that's your mistake. You have to look at it in context, and in context I can only say that this thing stinks from top to bottom and from inside to out."

He slammed his fork to the table. "*Marge!*"

She stared steadily at him. "I guess I spoke out of line, Ted. I'm sorry, darling. I didn't mean to preach." The muscles of her jaws were tightening in convulsive little clumps, and Kennedy saw she was fighting hard to keep back another big emotional outburst. He reached out and gripped her hand.

"Don't get worked up over this thing," he told her. "From now on, let me leave my job at 2:30 and forget it until the next morning. Otherwise we'll be at each other's throats all the time."

"You're right, dear. We'd better do that."

He turned his attention back to his meal. But the food seemed dead and tasteless now, and he was totally unable to recapture the euphoric mood of just a few moments before.

A gulf was opening between himself and his wife, and it was getting wider day by day. He thought back over that

glow of contentment and wondered how he could ever have attained it. What he and Spalding would be doing was a pretty soulless enterprise, he admitted to himself. There was nothing nice about it. And yet he had worked himself up into a fine Beethovenesque esthetic frenzy about it, until Marge's few harsh words had opened his eyes.

And I was proud of it, he thought. My God, don't I ever *think* at all?

7

JUNE 31, 2044—Leap-Year World Holiday, by the Permanent Calendar. The extra day, intercalated in the otherwise-changeless calendar every four years to take up the slack of the six hours and some minutes the Permanent Calendar was forced to ignore.

A day of revelry, Kennedy thought; a day between the days—a day that was neither Monday nor Tuesday, nor Wednesday nor Thursday, not Friday or Saturday, or even Sunday. A timeless day on which no one worked except for holiday double-pay, on which even the rules of civilization went into the discard-heap for twenty-four hours. It fell between Saturday June 30 and Sunday July 1; and since this was a leap-year there would be two nameless days instead of the one at the end of the year.

The Kennedys chose to spend their day at Joyland Amusement Park on the Floating Island in Long Island Sound. Privately Ted Kennedy detested the bustle of the World Holidays; but they were family customs, deeply embedded in his way of life, and he never dared to speak out against them.

The road was crowded. Bumper to bumper, deflector plate to deflector plate, the little enamelled beetles clung together on the Thruway. Kennedy sweated behind the wheel. The air-conditioners labored mightily. At his

side Marge looked fresh and gay in her light summer dress, red halter and light blue briefs. Her legs glistened; she wore the newest aluminum spray-ons.

Up ahead, a car stalled in the furious heat and the radar eye of Kennedy's automatic brake picked up the impulse and throttled the turbos; he and Marge rocked slightly forward as the car slowed to thirty.

The congestion cleared ahead and he whisked the car on. The inside-outside thermometer read 69 inside the car, 97 outside. The compass told him they were heading westward along the Thruway toward the Sound.

They reached another snag in the traffic pattern. Kennedy let go of the wheel and let his hand rest lightly on his wife's cool knee.

"Let's try to have a good time together today. Relaxed. Calm. Just having fun." Marge said.

"Sure, Marge. Today's World Holiday. No ulcers. today." He flopped back against the cushion as the car started moving violently. "Damm! These holiday drivers!"

IT HAD BEEN a rough month.

Rough, but exciting. He and Spalding had thrown themselves full-force into the pseudo-colony on Ganymede. Endless reams of paper covered with biographical sketches of people who never were; thick dossiers on Ganymedean weather and the rigors of life in a dome, and a million other things. It was like writing a story of space adventure, Kennedy thought, with one minor wrinkle: this wasn't for the magazines. It was going out over the newstapes and the fax sheets and people were gobbling it up.

It went like this:

Ganymede, 23 May 2044— Another day passed in relative comfort for the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration Corporation's experimental volunteer station on the tiny

world of Ganymede, after the heavy snowfall of yesterday. Lester Brookman, Colony Director, commented, "Except for the usual hazards of life on an alien world, we're doing fine."

The colony's one invalid was reported in good health— Mrs. Helene Davenant, 31, wife of an atmospheric engineer, who suffered an appendicitis attack early yesterday morning. Colony Surgeon David Hornsfall operated immediately. Dr. Hornsfall said after the operation, "Mrs. Davenant is in good shape and there is no danger of complications. The low gravity will aid in her quick recovery and I hope to have her back at work in the hydroponics shed in a few days." The news eased fears of millions on Earth who were thrown into alarm by a premature report of peritonitis.

And so it went, Kennedy thought. Emotional involvement; soap-opera on a cosmic scale. It was now a little over a month since the Kennedy-Spalding pseudo-colony had received its official unveiling; and in that month, life with Marge had grown increasingly difficult.

It was nothing overt, of course; she never spoke of Kennedy's work. But there were the silences in the evening where once there was enthusiastic chatter, the slight stiffness of the jaws and lips, the faint aloofness.

Well, he thought, maybe she'd get over it. Dinoli and Watsinski and the others were excited about the things he was doing with the project; he was making big strides upward in the Agency. And perhaps today he could effect some sort of rapprochement between Marge and himself. He banked the car sharply and sent it rocketing up the arching ramp that took it to the Joyland Bridge.

JOYLAND covered forty sprawling acres on the Floating Island in the Sound—built at the turn of the century for the Peace Fair of 2000-2001. The Island did not float now, of

course; it was solidly anchored to the floor of the Sound. Once it had floated, at the time of the Fair, and the only way to get there was to take a ferry that would chase the island around the Sound on its peregrinations. But the upkeep of the giant engines that powered the island had been too great; thirty years ago they had been ripped out and the island anchored a mile off shore, but the old name still clung.

The bridge to the island was a shimmering thread painfully bright in the noonday sun. Ted Kennedy paused at the toll-bridge, dropped his dollar in the tollkeeper's hands, and spurred the car ahead, onto the bridge.

Crossing took fifteen minutes; parking the car, another fifteen. Finally he was free of routine, with a parking check in his pocket and a fun-hat on his head. Marge wore one too: a huge orange thing with a myriad quivering paper snakes that gave her a Medusa-like appearance. His was more somber, a black and gray mortician's topper. Elsewhere he saw Roman helmets and horned Viking domes.

A girl in her twenties wandered by, hatless, dishevelled, wearing only a pair of briefs; she clutched her halter in one hand, a drinkflask in the other. Marge pointed to her and Kennedy nodded. She started to reel forward; a moment later she would have fallen and perhaps been trampled underfoot, but a smiling guard in Joyland's green uniform appeared from nowhere to catch her and gently drag her away into the shade. *This is World Holiday*, Kennedy thought. *When we step outside ourselves and leave our ulcers home.*

"Where do we begin?" Marge asked. A sign advertised the next firing of the rocket; there was a barren area on the west shore of the island where passenger rockets were fired. The rockets traveled sixty or seventy miles up, gave the passengers a good squint at

the spinning orb of Earth, and plunged back down to make a neat landing on the field. There hadn't been a major accident since 2039, when a hundred people died through a slight miscalculation and cast a shadow over a gay Sunday afternoon. Price ten dollars a head, but Kennedy had no desire to ride the rocket.

Elsewhere there were rollercoasters, drink parlors, fun houses, sideshows, a swimming pool, a waxworks.

They bought tickets for the rollercoaster and strapped themselves in tight. The car was jet-powered; it took off with a lurching thrust and kept going down the track, up and around, nightmarishly twisting and plunging.

At the end of the ride, dizzy, exhausted, they clung to each other and laughed. Arm in arm they staggered across to a drink parlor and ordered double scotches at the outside window. In the dimness within, Kennedy saw a man plunging wildly around in an alcoholic dance; he leaped up in a final frenzy, started to fall toward the floor, and an ever-present Joyland guard appeared and scooped him up in mid-fall. Kennedy sipped his drink and smiled at Marge. She smiled back with what seemed like sincere warmth. He wondered.

THEY HEADED down the main concourse, past the cheap booths that in other years they always ignored. But this time Marge stopped and tugged at his arm. "Look at that one!"

"Come on, Marge—you know these things are all rigged. I want to go to the funhouse."

"No—hold it, Ted. Look."

He looked. There was a new booth, one that he had never seen before. The flashy sign winked at them: *Send A Letter To Ganymede.*

A toothy, bare-chested carnie man leaned forward over the counter, smiling jovially and inviting trade. Next to

him a woman in yellow briefs and bandeau frowned in concentration as she filled out what seemed to be a telegram form.

"Come on, friends! Send your best wishes to the brave folks on Ganymede! Only one dollar for a ten-word message! Let them know how you feel about their valiant work!"

"Let's go over. I want to find out a few things," Kennedy said.

The carnie man grinned at them. "Care to send a letter to Ganymede, friends? Only a dollar." He shoved a yellow blank and a pencil at them.

The woman finished her message and handed it back. Kennedy caught only the heading at the top. It was addressed to Mrs. Helene Davenant, the appendicitis victim.

Quietly he said, "This is a new booth, isn't it?"

"The newest in the place. Just put it up last week."

"Whose idea was it? Do you know a Mr. Watsinski? Or Poggioli?"

"What are you, a detective? Come on, there are people waiting. Step right up, friends! Don't go away, lady—the brave pioneers on Ganymede want to hear from you!"

At Kennedy's left, a fat middleaged woman was writing a letter that began, *Dear Dr. Hornsfall...*

"Let's go Ted," Marge said suddenly.

"No. Just a second." He yanked a dollar out of his wallet, slapped it down, and picked up a pencil. With quick sloppy strokes he wrote: *Dear Director Brookman, Hope all is well with colony. Too bad you're just a publicity man's soap bubble. Signed, Jasper Greeblefizz.*

He handed over the filled-in sheet and said, "Here, make sure this gets delivered. Come on away from here, Marge."

He grasped Marge tightly by the hand and walked on at a rapid clip.

"You think my letter will get

there?" he asked tightly. "You think Director Brookman will answer it?"

She looked at him strangely. "I don't know why you're so upset, Ted. It's all part of the general picture, isn't it? This is a very clever gimmick."

"Yeah," he said. He looked back and saw a line of people waiting to send letters to the brave pioneers on Ganymede. A very clever gimmick. Very clever.

KENNEDY smiled crookedly. World Holiday. Step outside yourself and leave your ulcers behind. Girls who were, the epitome of prudishness thought nothing of whipping off their halters and letting the breeze cool their breasts until the park police intervened. Sober second-level men could ease their tensions in a frenzied alcoholic jig.

But World Holiday was no holiday for Ted Kennedy. There was no escaping Ganymede even out here.

Somehow he pretended gaiety. They had another drink, and another. They looped the loop and rode the caterpillars and goggled at the sweating freaks in the sideshow, and had more drinks.

Sometime later, they bought tickets for the swimming pool, the one place in Joyland where nudity went unquestioned, and spent an hour bobbing in the warm chlorinated water. Toward evening they watched the fireworks and wandered down to the rocket-field to see the big missile come in for a landing.

Kennedy felt dizzy. They wearily retraced their steps to the exit. The *Send A Letter To Ganymede* booth was doing land-office business.

At the parking lot, the attendant was dispensing sobertabs for all drivers; you couldn't get your car until you took one. Kennedy swallowed the tasteless little pellet and felt his mind clearing. His stomach began to knot again. He paused by his car, watching the purple and aureate brilliance of the

fireworks in the dusk-hung sky, listening to the big *swoosh* of the departing rocket.

The fun would go on all night, but he felt no more desire for amusement; Kennedy drove home slowly and cautiously, with his hand grimly gripping the wheel. Marge was exhausted; she curled up into a fetal ball on the back seat and slept.

Happy World Holiday to me, he thought tiredly.

8

SUNDAY was a gloom-shrouded botch of a day. Kennedy slept late and woke with his mind still clouded by bitterness and his head aching. He spent an awkward, uncomfortable day in and around the house with Marge. The 'fax-sheet gave the rundown on the World Holiday's damage: a thousand lives lost in the Appalachia district alone, much carnage, property destruction, theft. A good day's fun.

It was his turn to operate the carpool, come Monday, the second of July, as 2044 swung into its second half. When he reached the office he found a crisp little note waiting for him on his desk, asking him to come down to Dinoli's office.

There was quite a turnout. Dinoli himself faced the door, keen-eyes and wide awake, hunched over with his gnarled hands locked. Standing around Dinoli were four men: Watsinski, looking bored; McDermott, the second-level man who was handling governmental liaison on the Ganymede Contract; Executive Hubbel of the Corporation. There was also a fourth man, thick-necked and coarse-featured, with a broad genial smile and a delicate network of broken capillaries spread out over his face.

Dinoli said, "Mr. Bullard, I'd like you to meet Theodore Kennedy, Exec-

utive Third-Level of Steward & Dinoli."

Bullard swung forward. He was a bull of a man, six four or more in height, with the biggest hands Kennedy had ever seen. He proffered one, mangled Kennedy's hand momentarily in greeting, and boomed, "Very pleased to meet you, Mr. Kennedy. I've heard wonderful things about your work."

"Thank you, sir."

"Did you enjoy your holiday?" Dinoli asked, in his dark vast voice.

"Yes, sir. It was very good, sir."

"Glad to hear it. You know, of course, that Mr. Bullard here is head of the Corporation?"

Kennedy nodded. Smiling, Bullard said, "I understand you're the man who's responsible for development of the—ah—colony on Ganymede. I want to tell you that it's a brilliant concept. Brilliant. The whole nation—the whole world—is enraptured by the struggles of the unfortunate few hundreds of souls you've invented. And that's why I've come over here this morning to make this offer to you."

"Offer, sir?"

"A very fine one. You've succeeded in capturing the feel of the Ganymede terrain beautifully, considering the second-hand nature of your data. But Mr. Dinoli and I believe that you'd do an even finer job if you had a little actual experience of living conditions on Ganymede. It would give your project that extra touch of reality that would insure the success of the campaign."

Kennedy blinked. He wondered what Bullard was leading up to. Dinoli was beaming.

BULLARD said, "There's a supply ship leaving shortly for the Ganymede Outpost. There is room for one passenger aboard that ship. I've spoken to Mr. Dinoli and we've agreed to offer you a chance to be aboard that ship. You can spend three weeks on

Ganymede at Corporation expense. How would you like that?"

Kennedy felt steamrollered. "Sir, I..."

"You want time to think about it. I understand how it is. You're in the midst of a difficult work program; you have certain personal commitments. Well, the ship departs on Thursday. If you care to be on it, all you need to do say the word."

Kennedy looked at Dinoli, at Wat-sinski, at McDermott. Their faces gave no hint of feeling; they wanted him to go. They wanted him to drop everything, race off to a cold little iceball in space, and live there for three weeks in utter privation so the campaign could be more realistic.

It was impossible to come right out and say no, right here. He would have to stall. "I'll—have to take the matter up with my wife, of course. This is—so sudden. This great opportunity..."

"Of course," Bullard said.

Signed, sealed and delivered, Kennedy thought. "Yes, sir," he said hoarsely. "Thank you, sir." To Dinoli he said: "Is there anything else, Mr. Dinoli?"

"No, Ted. That'll be all. Just wanted to let you know the good news, son."

A secretary showed him out; he returned numbly to his office on Eleven, the office he now shared with Dave Spalding. *Trip to Ganymede*, he thought. *I'll tell them that Marge won't let me go. That we're expecting a baby. Anything.*

It wouldn't look good, his refusing, but he was damned if he was going to spend three weeks living under the conditions he'd been writing about.

"You look like you've been guillotined," Spalding said, as Kennedy came in. "They didn't fire you!"

"No such luck. I've got a great opportunity. The Corporation's offering me a three-week trip to Ganymede to get the feel of things."

He pulled down one of the big loose-leaf volumes they had made up. They

had written biographies of each of the three hundred and thirteen colonists they had peopled Ganymede with, and each morning they picked a different one to feature in the newsbreaks.

"I think it's time to get Mary Walls pregnant," Kennedy said. "We haven't had a pregnancy on Ganymede yet. You have the medical background Rollins dug up?"

SPALDING produced a slim portfolio bound in black leather—a doctor's report on possible medical problems in the colony. Childbirth under low gravity, pressure diseases, things like that.

Spalding typed out a press release about the first pregnancy on Ganymede, with quotes from the happy mother-to-be, the stunned prospective father ("Gosh, this is great news! I know my Ma back in Texas will jump up and clack her heels when she finds out about Mary") and, of course, from the ever-talkative Colony Director, Brookman.

While he worked, Kennedy checked the photo file for a snapshot of Mary Walls—Agency technicians had prepared a phony composograph of every member of the colony—and readied it for release with Spalding's newsbreak. He added the day's news to the Colony Chronicle he was writing—excerpts were being printed daily in the tabloids—and wrote a note to himself to remember that a maternity outfit would need to be ordered before Thursday for Mrs. Walls, to be shipped up on the next supply ship.

It had gotten to the point where he *believed* in his colony up there. He could picture slabjawed Director Brookman, an outwardly fierce, inwardly sentimental man, could picture rosy-cheeked Mary Walls being told by mustachioed Dr. Hornsfall that she was going to be blessed with issue...

And it was all phony. The Outpost on Ganymede consisted of a couple of

dozen foul-smelling, bearded spacemen, period. He didn't want to go there.

They phoned in the pregnancy store before noon, and got busy sketching out the next-day's work. Spalding was writing Director Brookman's autobiography, to be serialized in a big weekly, while Kennedy blocked in succeeding events in Mary Walls' pregnancy. He toyed momentarily with the idea of having her suffer a miscarriage in two months' time, but rejected it; it would be good for a moment's pathos, but quickly forgotten. Having her stay pregnant would be more effective.

Near closing-time the reaction hit him, as it did every day toward the finish. He sat back and stared at his trembling hands.

My God, he thought, this is the biggest hoax humanity has ever known. And I originated it.

He estimated that perhaps fifty people were in on the hoax now. That was too many; what if one of them cracked up and spilled it all? Would they all be lynched?

They would not, he answered himself. The thing was too firmly embedded in reality by now; he had done his job too well. If someone—anyone—stood up and yelled that this was all a fake, that there was no colony on Ganymede, it would be a simple matter to laugh the accusation down as crackpottery and go ahead manufacturing the next day's set of press releases.

But still the enormity of it chilled Kennedy. He looked at Spalding, busily clacking out copy, and shuddered. By now, the afternoon telefax sheets were spewing forth the joyous news that Mary Walls—petite little Mary Walls, 25, redhaired, a colony dietician, married two years to lanky Mike Walls, 29, of Houston, Texas—was about to bear young.

He clenched his fists. Where did it stop? Was anything real?

THEY LOCKED away their books and the car-pool people assembled.

Kennedy dropped each off at their destinations, and swung his car finally into his own garage.

Marge had his afternoon cocktail ready for him. He told her about Bul-lard's visit, about Dinoli's offer. "So they want to send me to Ganymede for three weeks, and I'd be leaving Thursday? How d'ye like that!"

She smiled. "I think it's wonderful! I'll miss you, of course, but..."

His mouth sagged open. "You think I'm going to accept that crazy deal?"

"Aren't you?"

"But I thought..." He closed his eyes a moment. "You want me to go, Marge?"

"It's a grand opportunity for you, dear. You may never get another chance to see space. And it's safe, isn't it? They say space travel is safer than riding a car." She laughed; it was a brittle laugh that told Kennedy a great many things he did not want to know.

She wants me to go, he thought. She wants to get rid of me for three weeks.

He took a deep, calm sip. "As a matter of fact, I have until Wednesday to make up my mind," he said. "I told them I'd have to discuss the matter with you before I could agree to anything. But I guess it's okay with you."

Her voice cracked a little as she said, "I certainly wouldn't object. Have I ever stood in the way of your advancement, Ted?"

9

THE SHIP left at 1100 sharp on Thursday, July 5, 2044. Departure went smoothly and on schedule. The ship was nameless, bearing only the number GC-1073; the captain was a gruff man named Hills who did not seem pleased at the prospect of ferrying a groundlubber along with him to Ganymede. Blastoff was from Spacefield Seven, a wide jet-blasted area in the flatlands of New Jersey.

A small group of friends and well-wishers rode out with Kennedy in the jetcab to see him off. Marge came, and Dave Spalding, and Mike Cameron, and Ernie Watsinski. Kennedy sat moodily in the corner of the cab, staring downward at the smoke-stained sky of industrialized New Jersey, saying nothing, thinking dark thoughts.

He was not looking forward to the trip at all.

The ship was a thin, too-thin needle standing on its tail, in the middle of the vast grassless field. Little trucks had rolled up around it; one was feeding fuel into the reaction-mass hold, one was laden down with supplies for the men of the outpost, another carried mail—*real* mail, not the carnival-inspired fakery Kennedy had seen on World Holiday—for the men up there.

The ship would carry a crew of six, plus cargo. The invoices listed Ted Kennedy as part of the cargo.

He stood nervously at the edge of the field, watching the ship being loaded and half-listening to the chatter of his farewell committee. A tall gaunt-looking man in a baggy gray uniform came up to them and without waiting for silence said, "Which one of you is Kennedy?"

"I am." It was almost a croak.

"Glad to know you. I'm Charley Sizer, ship's medic; come on with me."

Kennedy looked at his watch. "But it's an hour till blastoff time."

Sizer grinned. "Indeed it is. I want to get you loaded up with gravanol, so acceleration doesn't catch you by surprise. When that big fist comes down you won't like it. Let's go, now—you're holding up the works."

Kennedy glanced around at the suddenly solemn little group and said, "Well, I guess this is it. See you all three weeks from now. Ernie, make sure my paychecks get sent home on time." He waited a couple of seconds more. "Marge?" he said finally. "Can I get a kiss goodbye?"

"I'm sorry, Ted." She pecked at his lips and stepped back. He grinned lopsidedly and let Sizer lead him away.

HE CLAMBERED up the catwalk into the ship. It was hardly an appealing interior. The ship was poorly lit and narrow; the companionways were strictly utilitarian. This was no shiny passenger-ship. Racks of space-suits hung to one side; far to the front he saw two men peering at a vastly complex control panel.

"Here's where you'll stay," Sizer said, indicating a sort of hammock swung between two pillars. "Suppose you climb in now and I'll give you the gravanol shot."

Kennedy climbed in. There was a viewplate just to the left of his head; he glanced out, and saw Marge and Watsinski and the others standing far away, at the edge of the field, watching the ship. Sizer bustled around him, strapping a safety-webbing over him. The gaunt medic vanished and returned a few minutes later with a formidable hypodermic.

"This stuff will take all the fret out of blastoff," Sizer explained. "We could hit as high as 10gs, and you wouldn't even know it. You'll sleep like a babe." He swabbed Kennedy's arm with alcohol and jabbed the needle in. Kennedy felt no internal changes that would make him resistant to gravity.

"You'll doze off soon. Next thing you know, we'll be past the Moon and Ganymede-bound."

Kennedy started to protest that he wasn't sleepy, that he was much too tense to be able to fall asleep. But even as he started to protest, he felt a wave of fatigue sweep over him. He yawned.

Grinning, Sizer said, "Don't worry, now. See you later, friend."

Kennedy lay back. He was securely webbed down in the acceleration hammock; he could hardly move. Drowsiness was getting him now.

Sleep blurred his vision as the time crawled on toward 1100. He wanted to

be awake at the moment of blastoff, to feel the impact. But he was getting tired. *I'll just close my eyes a second*, he thought. *Just catch forty winks or so before we lift.*

He let his eyelids drop.

A FEW MINUTES later, he heard the sound of chuckling. Someone touched his arm. He blinked his eyes open and saw Medic Sizer and Captain Hills standing next to his hammock.

"There something wrong?" he asked in alarm.

"We just wanted to find out how you were doing," Hills said. "Everything okay?"

"Couldn't be better; I'm loose and relaxed. But isn't it almost time for blastoff?"

Hills laughed shortly. "Yeah. That's a good one. Look out that port, Mr. Kennedy."

Numbly Ted Kennedy swivelled to the left and looked out. He saw darkness, broken by bright hard little dots of painful light. At the bottom of the viewplate, just barely visible, hung a small green ball with the outlines of Europe and Asia visible. It looked like a geographical globe. At some distance away hung a smaller pockmarked ball.

Everything seemed frozen and terribly silent, like a Christmas-card scene.

In a hushed voice Kennedy said, "Are we in space?"

"We sure are. You slept through the whole works—blastoff and null-g and everything. We're a half-day out from Earth. From here till Ganymede, it's all a placid downhill coast."

"Is it safe to get out of this cradle?" he asked.

Hills shrugged. "Why not?"

"I won't float, or anything?"

"Three hours ago we imparted spin along the longitudinal axis, Mr. Kennedy. The gravity in here is precisely one g—Earth-norm. If you're hungry, food's on in the galley."

He ate. Ship food, packaged synthetics, nourishing and healthfully balanced—and about as tasty as straw briquettes. He ate silently and alone, serving himself; the rest of the men had already had their midday meal.

Four of them were playing cards in the fore cubicle that looked out onto the stars. Kennedy was shocked and amused all at once when he stepped through the unlocked door and saw the four of them, grimy and bearded in their filthy fatigue uniforms, squatting around an empty full-drum playing poker with savage intensity, while five feet away from them all the splendor of the skies lay unveiled.

He had no desire to break into the game, and they ignored him so thoroughly that it was clear he was not invited, so he turned away, smiling. No doubt after you made enough trips, he thought, the naked wonder of space turned dull on you, and poker remained eternally fascinating. The sight of an infinity of blazing suns was finite in its appeal, Kennedy decided. But he himself stared long and eye-strainingly at the sharp blackness outside, broken by the stream of stars and by the distant redness of what he supposed was Mars.

MARS RECEDED. Kennedy thought he caught sight of ringed Saturn later in the day. Hours passed. He had brought a book with him, *"The Brothers Karamazov"*.

Two days went by, maybe three. He read several hundred pages of Dostievski. He let his beard grow, until stubbly shoots began to itch fiercely; then he shaved it off. Once he started to write a letter to Marge, but didn't finish it.

Finally, he grew tired of the splendor of the skies. The stars were glorious, but sheer glory palled, at length. He could meditate only so long on the magnitude of space, on the multiplicity of suns, on the strange races that might circle red Antares or bright Capella.

Finally great Jupiter blotted out the sky, and Sizer came by to tell him that the icy crescent sliyer he saw faintly against the mighty planet's bulk was their destination, Ganymede.

Again he strapped into the cradle. A second time Sizer jabbed his arm, and a second time he slept. When he woke, some time later, there was whiteness outside the port—the endless eye-numbing whiteness of the snowfields of Ganymede.

It was day—"day" being a ghostly sort of half-dusk. Ted Kennedy knew enough about the mechanics of Ganymede to be aware that Ganymede day lasted slightly more than seven Earth days, the length of time it took Ganymede to revolve once about Jupiter—for Ganymede, like Earth's Moon, kept the same face toward its primary at all times, its day equalling its month.

Jupiter now was a gibbous splinter from dayside, a vast chip of a planet that seemed to be falling toward Ganymede's bleak surface like a celestial spear. Visible against the big planet's bulk was the lesser splinter of one of the other Galilean moons—Io, most likely, Kennedy thought.

From his port, nothing was visible but the ugly teeth of broken mountains, bare, tufted with layers of frozen ammonia, misted by swirling methane clouds.

THE SHIP'S audio system barked. "All hands in suits! Mr. Kennedy, come forward, on the double. We've arrived on Ganymede."

Sizer and one of the crewmen came toward him, swinging the hollow bulk of a spacesuit between them like an eviscerated corpse.

They helped him into it, clamped down the helmet, and switched on his breathing unit and his audio.

Sizer said, "You won't be in this thing long. Don't touch any of the gadgets, and try not to sneeze. If you feel your breathing supply going bad, yell and yell *fast*. Everything clear?"

"Yes," Kennedy said. He felt warm and humid in the suit; they hadn't bothered to switch on his air conditioners, or perhaps there weren't any. He saw men starting down the catwalk in their suits, and he advanced toward the yawning airlock, moving in a stiff, awkward robot-shuffle until he discovered the suit was flexible enough to allow him to walk normally.

He lowered himself through the lock and, with great care, descended the catwalk. He saw a sprawling low dome to his right, housing several slipshod prefabricated buildings. A truck had popped through an airlock in the side of the dome and was heading toward them.

A sharp wind whistled about him; paradoxically, he was sweating stickily inside his suit, but he also sensed the numbing cold that was just a fraction of an inch away from his skin. In the wan daylight, he could see the cold outlines of stars bridging the blue-black sky.

It was a hard, bitter place where the wind mumbled obscenities in your spacesuit's audio pickup, and the stars glimmered in the daylight. He looked into the distance, wondering if any of the natives were on hand to witness the new arrival, but as far as he could see the landscape was barren and empty.

The truck arrived. Within its sealed, pressurized cab rode a redbearded man who signalled for them to climb into the back.

The truck turned and headed toward the opening airlock of the Ganymede dome.

10

HE FELT penned in, in the dome. He met the sixteen men who lived there ever since Corporation money and Corporation skill and Corporation spaceships had

let man reach Ganymede. He shifted uneasily from foot to foot, breathing the sharp, faintly-acrid synthetic atmosphere of the dome, feeling mildly queasy-stomached at the lessened pull of gravity. Ganymede exerted only 81% of Earth's pull on him; he weighed just about 142 pounds here.

He half-expected to see the big figure of Colony Director Lester Brookman come striding out of the dimness to shake his hand and welcome him to Ganymede, but Brookman was just a myth he had invented one rainy May afternoon. The real head of the Ganymede Outpost was a stubby little man with a bushy gray-flecked beard. His name was Gunther.

Gunther eyed Ted Kennedy stolidly after Kennedy had disencumbered himself of the spacesuit—a small, beady-eyed man with blue shouting-veins standing out on his neck.

He said, "You're Kennedy?"

"That's right."

"Papers say you'll be here until the ship returns to Earth. That's three Gannadays from now, a little over three weeks. You'll be living in Barracks B on the second level; one of the men will show you where your bunk is. There's to be no smoking anywhere in the dome, at any time. If you have any questions concerning operations here, you're to ask me. If you're told by any member of this base that a given area is restricted, you're not to enter it under any circumstance. Clear?"

"Clear," Kennedy said. He resented the brusqueness of Gunther's manner, but perhaps that was what six months or a year of life on a frozen waste of a world did to a man.

"Do you know how to use a spacesuit?"

"No."

"As expected. You'll receive instruction starting at 0900 tomorrow. You'll undergo a daily drill in spacesuit technique, until you've mastered its func-

tions. We never know when the dome's going to crack."

He said it flatly and quietly, as if he might be saying, *We never know when it may start to rain.* Kennedy nodded without commenting.

"You'll be taken on a tour of the area, as soon as you request it, provided there's a man free to accompany you. Under no circumstances are you to leave the dome alone."

"When will I get a chance to meet some of the aliens?"

Gunther seemed to look away. "You'll be allowed to meet the Gannys at such time as we see fit, Mr. Kennedy. Are there any further questions?"

There were, but Kennedy didn't feel like asking them. He shook his head instead, and Gunther signalled to another member of the Outpost to show him to his room.

It had a hard cot covered with a single sheet, a washstand, a baggage rack. It looked like nothing so much as a cheap hotel room in a rundown section of an old city. It was very Earthlike; there was nothing alien about it, except the view that could be had by peering around the facing barracks-building at the bleak snowfields.

The three Outpost buildings had been prefabricated, of course. A central ventilator system kept the dome and all the rooms within it reasonably fresh. A central power system supplied light and heat; the plumbing in the dome was crude but effective.

A SPACEMAN named Jaeckel drilled him in the use of a spacesuit, showed him how to manipulate the controls that blew his nose and wiped his forehead and ventilated the suit.

Once Ted Kennedy had mastered the suit, they let him go outside the dome, always in the company of an off-duty Outpost man. The snow was thick and firmly packed into ice; bare patches of

rock thrust snouts up here and there. A paraffin lake was located half a mile west of the dome—a broad, dull-looking dark body of liquid. Kennedy stood at its shore and peered downward.

"Does anything live in it?"

"Snails and toads and things; the Ganymedean equivalent, of course. Methane-breathers, you know. We see them come hopping up on shore during the big storms."

"How about fish-equivalents?" Kennedy asked.

"We don't know. We don't have any boats and we don't have any fishing-tackle. Radar says there's a few shapes moving down at the bottom, but we haven't had time to find them yet."

He was taken out to see the vegetation, too: the "forests" of scraggly little waxen bushes, geared to the ammonia-methane respiratory cycle. They were inches high, with thick rigid leaves spread flat to catch as much of the sunlight as they could; even the strongest winds failed to disturb them where they grew along a snow-banked hillside.

After he had seen the compact turbines that powered the outpost, after he had inspected the kitchen and the game room and the little library, there was not much else for Kennedy to see. On the third day he asked Gunther when he'd be allowed to meet the inhabitants of Ganymede; Gunther said irritably, "Soon!"

He spoke with an angular faded-looking man named Engel, a linguist in Corporation employ. Engel was working on the Ganymedean language.

"It's fairly simple," he told Kennedy. "The Gannys haven't developed a written culture, and a language limited to oral transmission doesn't usually get to be very complex. It starts off as a series of agreed-upon grunts and it generally stays that way. The Gannys we've met have a vocabulary of perhaps a thousand active words and

a residual vocabulary no bigger than three or four thousand. The language agglutinates—that is, the words pile up. There's one word for *man*; but instead of having a separate word, like *warrior*, for the concept *man-with-spear*, their word for warrior is simply *manwithspear*. And the grammar's ridiculously simple, too—no inflections or declensions, no variation in terms of gender or case. The Gannys are lucky; they aren't saddled with the confused remnants of the old Indo-Aryan protolanguage the way we are. It's a terribly simple language."

"Meaning that they're terribly simple people?"

ENGEL LAUGHED. "It's not quite a one-to-one correlation. Matter of fact, they're damned quick thinkers, and they get along pretty well despite the handicap of such a limited language. It's a limited world. You don't need many words on a planet where there's hardly any seasonal change, and where living conditions remain uniform century in and century out. Uniformly miserable, I mean."

Kennedy nodded. Engel showed him a mimeographed pamphlet he had prepared, labelled "*Notes Toward A Ganymede Etymology and Philology*."

"Mind if I look this over?" Kennedy asked.

Engel shrugged and said, "I guess it's all right; it can't do any harm to let you read it."

Kennedy studied the pamphlet alone in his room that "night," for lack of any better recreation. He fell asleep with the light on and the book still open, mumbling disjointed Ganny phrases which he hoped followed Engel's phonetic system; he didn't even notice it when the room-light cut off, as it did every night at 0100 camp-time.

On the fourth day, a tremendous storm swept in and engulfed the area.

Kennedy stood in the yard near the arching curve of the dome, staring out in awe at the fierce torrent of precipitated ammonia that poured down on the plain, giving way finally to feathery clouds of ammonia-crystal snow and then, at last, to silence. The plain was covered with a fresh fall, now, and after it came the irascible wind, sculpturing the new fall into fantastic spires and eddies. In the distance he saw the spaceship still upright, its landing vanes concealed by fresh snow, its dark prow tipped with mounds of white.

And on the fifth day he was again alone in his room when a tattoo of knocks sounded. He slipped Engel's linguistics-pamphlet under his soggy pillow and opened the door.

Jaeckel stood there. "Gunther sent me to get you. Some aliens are here. They're waiting outside the dome."

FOUR OF them went through the lock—Gunther, Engel, Kennedy, and a spaceman named Palmer. Kennedy felt a strange tingle of excitement. These were the beings the Steward & Dinoli agency was training mankind to hate; these were the beings Alf Haugen was gradually building up as enemies of humanity, and he was going to meet them now.

There were three of them, standing in a little group ten feet from the airlock entrance. Naked except for their cloth girdle, noseless, eyes hooded, they looked to Kennedy like aborigines of some bizarre South Sea Island as seen through the eyes of a dream. Their skin, pale white, had a waxy sheen to it. Their mouths were glum sagging semicircles, lipless. At first, Ted Kennedy was surprised that they could bear the murderous cold, standing in calm nudity with no sign of discomfort.

But why the hell shouldn't they, he thought. This is their world. They

breathe its foul, corrosive air and they brush their teeth—if they have teeth—with the high-octane stuff that flows in their lakes and rivers. They probably can't understand how we can possibly survive in the blazing heat of Earth, and drink that poisonous hydrogen-and-oxygen compound we're so fond of.

"These three are from the closest tribe," Gunther said. "They live eleven miles to the east, and come here every seventh Earth-day to talk to us."

And indeed they *were* talking; one of them began speaking in a low monotone, addressing his words to Gunther.

Ted Kennedy could only pick out a word here and there; his few hours spent with Engel's booklet had not made him a master of the language. But the words he picked out interested him greatly.

For the alien seemed to be saying: "...once again...leave us...hate carryingbeings...interfere...when...you go...soon..."

Gunther replied with a rapid-fire string of syllables, spoken with such machine-gun intensity that Kennedy could scarcely catch the meaning of a single word. He did pick up one, though; it was the Ganny word for total negation, absolute refusal.

The alien replied: "sadness...pain...until go...sacrilege..." (forceful but untranslatable verb)

"Mind if I ask what the conversation's all about?" Kennedy asked.

Engel blinked. Gunther tightened his lips, then said, "We're arranging for transportation of supplies to the alien village in exchange for a bit of negotiation for mining rights with the village chief. He's telling us when the best time of day to make the delivery is."

Kennedy tried to hide his surprise. Either Gunther had just reeled off a flat lie, or else Kennedy had been completely wrong in his translation of the

conversation. It had seemed to him that the aliens had been demanding an Earth evacuation, and that Gunther had been refusing. But perhaps he had been wrong; not even the simplest of languages could be learned in a matter of days.

THE ALIENS were stirring restlessly. The spokesman repeated his original statement twice, then tipped his head back in a kind of ceremonial gesture, leaned forward, and exhaled a white cloud. Ammonia crystals formed briefly on the face-plate of Gunther's breathing-helmet. The Corporation man replied with a sentence too terse for Kennedy to be able to translate.

Then the aliens nodded their heads and uttered the short disyllable that meant "Farewell"; Kennedy caught it clearly. Automatically the response-word floated up from his memory, and he said it: "Ah-yah." The other three Earthmen spoke the word at the same time. The aliens turned and gravely stalked away into the whirling wind.

A moment later Gunther whirled and seized Kennedy's arm tightly with his spacegloved hand. He glared at Kennedy.

"What did you say?" he demanded. "Did I just hear you say a word to that Ganny in his own language? *Where did you learn it? Who authorized you to learn Ganny?* I could have you shot for this, Kennedy—Agency pull or no Agency pull!"

II

FOR A MOMENT, Ted Kennedy stood frozen, listening to the fierce wind swirl around him, not knowing what to say. By revealing his knowledge of Ganymede he had committed a major blunder.

"Well?" Gunther demanded. "How come you speak Ganny?"

Engel came to his rescue.

"That's the only word he knows," the tall linguist said. "Couple of days ago he was visiting me and when he left I said goodbye to him in Ganny. He wanted to know what I had just said, and I told him. There's no harm in that, Gunther."

Uncertainly the outpost chief released his grip on Kennedy's arm. Kennedy realized Engel was saving his own skin as well as his by the lie; evidently it was out of bounds for him to speak the native tongue.

But he saw his advantage. "Look here, Gunther—I'm not a Corporation man, and I'm only technically under your command. Where do you come off threatening to shoot me for saying goodbye to a Ganny in his own language? I could let Bullard know and he'd bounce you down to tenth level for a stunt like that."

In a short sharp sentence, Gunther expressed his opinion of Corporation Executive Bullard. Then he said: "Let's go back into the dome. This is no place to stand around having a chat."

Without waiting for further discussion he signalled inside to open the lock. Kennedy was more than happy to turn his back on the bleakness of the open Ganymede field.

They stripped off their spacesuits in silence, and racked them. Gunther said, "Suppose we go to my quarters, Kennedy. We can talk about things there."

"Should I come too?" Engel asked. "No, you get about your business. And watch out how much classified info you teach to visitors next time, Mr. Engel."

Gunther's quarters proved to be considerably more auspicious than the other barracksrooms under the dome. He opened a closet and took out a half-empty bottle.

"Care for a drink?"

Kennedy did not, but he nodded deliberately. "Sure."

Gunther fixed the drink with a most un-hostly lack of grace, handed it to Kennedy, and said, "I'm sorry I blew up over such a little thing out there. You have to understand what life's like here, Kennedy. It's not easy on the nerves; not at all. I try to maintain discipline over myself as well as the others, but there are times when my nerves just pop. I'm sorry it had to happen to you, that's all."

KENNEDY smiled. "You practically ordered me off to the firing-squad because I knew a word of Ganny. How come the language's so top-secret?"

It was a telling question. Gunther shifted uneasily and said, "It isn't, really. It's merely that we want to make sure all Earth-Ganymede negotiations take place through the Corporation. We wouldn't want another outfit to set up shop here and try to cut in."

"Meaning, presumably, that you suspect I'm going to learn the language, compile a dictionary of Ganny when I get back to Earth, and sell it for a fabulous sum to some as-yet-non-existent competitor of the Corporation? I assure you I've got no such sinister intentions."

"I haven't accused you of *anything*, Kennedy; but we have to take certain security precautions."

"I understand that."

"Good. In case you're filing a report, I'd greatly appreciate it if you'd omit any mention of this incident. As a favor to me."

He left Gunther soon after, feeling greatly perplexed. The Outpost chief's real motivation seemed utterly transparent. Gunther was not fearing the advent of a rival corporation; it took years of legal work and billions in capital to build an organization the size of ED&E. No wildcat operation was going to send a ship to Ganymede to whisk mining rights out from under

Gunther's sharp nose, making use of a Ganny dictionary prepared for them by Kennedy.

No, there could be only one possible reason why Gunther had reacted so violently when Kennedy had displayed a seeming understanding of Ganny. Gunther was afraid that Kennedy would overhear something the Corporation was trying to keep secret.

And that something, Kennedy suspected, was the fact that the Ganymedeans were hostile to the idea of having Earthmen settle on their world, and—far from being willing to negotiate for mining rights—were demanding that Gunther and his men get off.

And if that was the case, he thought, then the only way the Corporation was going to get what it wanted on Ganymede would be by a virtual extermination of the Gannys. No mere United Nations "police action," as Kennedy and the other Agency men had been led to believe, but a full-scale bitter war of subjugation.

Sure, they would rationalize it. The Gannys were a non-technological people who owned a vast horde of valuable radioactive ores and had no intentions of using them; for the public good of the solar system, then, these ores should be taken from them.

IT WAS A nasty business, and Ted Kennedy had been drawn into it deeper than he had suspected. Oh, he had never thought it was a lily-white enterprise; but despite Marge's quiet opposition, and Spalding's bitter outbursts, he had gone along with the Agency unthinkingly. The Agency Mask had been his defense: the unthinking reservation of judgement that allowed him to enter into a contract with little concern for the questions of values tangential to it.

Well, now he was seeing it clearly and first-hand. He returned to his room, planning to study the Ganny

dictionary more intently. Next week, when the aliens returned, he *had* to know more of the true position of things.

But his door was ajar when he reached his room, and the light was on. There were no locks on the doors, but he had hardly expected someone just to walk in. He pushed open the door.

Engel was sitting on the edge of his bed waiting for him.

Kennedy waved cheerily to him. "I guess I owe you thanks. That could have been a nasty business with Gunther out there if you hadn't said what you did."

"Yes. Look here, Kennedy—I have to have that booklet back. Immediately. Where is it?"

"Back? Why?"

"Gunther would have me flayed if he knew I gave it to you. It was really unpardonable on my part—but you seemed so interested, and I was so anxious to have you see my work and be impressed by it."

Kennedy circled behind Engel and drew the dogeared pamphlet out from under the pillow. Engel reached for it, but Kennedy snatched it quickly away.

"Give that to me! Kennedy, don't you understand that Gunther absolutely will execute me if he knew you had that? It's classified!"

"Why?"

"That doesn't matter. Give it to me."

Kennedy tucked it under his arm. "I don't intend to; I want to study it some more. It's a very ingenious work, Engel. I *am* impressed."

"If you don't give that to me," Engel said slowly, "I'll tell Gunther that you entered my quarters when I wasn't there and *stole* it from me. I know how many copies there are supposed to be. But I don't want to have to do that; hand it over, will you?" The linguist nibbled at his lip and

flicked a globe of sweat from his forehead.

THE ROOM was very quiet a moment. Kennedy tightened his grip on the booklet under his arm. Staring levelly at Engel, he said, "You don't want to do that. I'll make a deal with you: you let me keep the dictionary, and I'll make sure Gunther never has occasion to find out you gave it to me. And I'll return it when I leave Ganymede. Otherwise, if you try to tell Gunther I stole the dictionary and I'll tell him you gave it to me of your own free will, and then lied to him outside the dome just now to keep your own nose clean. It'll be my word against yours, but you'll be in a tough way trying to explain just why you took my part out there."

Engel knotted his hands nervously together. "It won't wash. Gunther trusts me..."

"Like hell he does. Gunther doesn't even trust himself. Let me keep the dictionary, or I'll go to Gunther right now and tell him the whole story."

Scowling, Engel said, "Okay. The dictionary's yours—but keep your mouth shut the next time you're around any Gannys. If you stop to ask a local chief the time of day, Gunther'll roast us both."

Three days slipped by, in Kennedy's second week on Ganymede. He spent much of his time studying Engel's little handbook of the Ganny language, and repeated phrases and sentences to himself each night in a muttered whisper.

He went on jeeptrips over the Ganymedean terrain; it was night-time on Ganymede now, and would be for four more Earth-days; Jupiter hung broodingly massive in the sky, blotting out the stars.

Moons danced in the sky, swimming in and out of sight with dizzy unpredictability; now Io, now Europa, now

far-off Callisto came whirling by, and their orbits were a computer-man's nightmare. Kennedy was impressed.

The terrain was monotonous, though—endless bluish icefields unbroken by sign of life. Once Kennedy asked Gunther if he could visit a Ganny village for a change, instead of merely rolling on over icy wastes.

Gunther scowled. "I'm afraid not. The Ganny villages are restricted areas for visitors to the Outpost."

"Why?"

"You don't ask *why* around here, Kennedy. You've been very co-operative up to now. Don't spoil it."

With a brusque gesture Gunther dismissed him. Kennedy turned away, his mind full of unaskable questions.

HE STUDIED his handbook. He waited impatiently for the Gannys to pay their next visit to the outpost; he wanted to find out exactly what the relationship between Earthman and alien was.

If the natives were bluntly opposed to Terran operations on Ganymede, then the whole Agency-nurtured maneuver was nothing more or less than a naked power grab on the part of the Corporation, a set-up maneuver that would drag the U.N. in to conquer Ganymede—at no expense to the Corporation—and then hand the little world over to Bullard & Co. on a chrome-plated platter.

But Kennedy knew he had to have more proof. He had to speak to the natives first-hand, without any of Gunther's men around.

The day before the expected visit of the Gannys, Kennedy happened to mention to Gunther that he was looking forward to seeing the aliens again.

"Oh? You haven't heard? The visit's been called off. It's some sort of holy season in the village, and they've decided not to see any Earthmen till it's over."

"And when will it be over?"

"Five Ganny days from now. A little more than a month, Earthtime."

That meant he would have no further opportunity at all for seeing the Gannys. And this "some sort of holy season" sounded too slick, too patently contrived, to be convincing.

No. Gunther simply did not want him to penetrate Corporation activities on Ganymede any deeper.

There was only a week left to his stay now. He knew he would have to move quickly and efficiently in his remaining time, if he were to discover the underlying facts of the Ganymede operation.

Ted Kennedy disliked blackmail, but in this case there was no help for it; he went to see Engel.

12

THE LINGUIST was not happy to see his visitor. Engel greeted him unsmilingly and said, "What do you want, Kennedy?"

With elaborate care Kennedy shut the door and took a seat facing Engel. "The first thing I want is absolute silence on your part. If a word of what I tell you now gets back to Gunther or anyone else, I'll kill you."

Engel said, "Go ahead. Talk."

"I want you to do me a favor. I want you to get me one of those jeeps and fix things so I can go out alone during sleeptime tonight."

"Kennedy, this is preposterous. I..."

"You nothing. Either I get the jeep or I tell Gunther you're a subversive who deliberately gave me the Ganny dictionary, and who tipped me off on a few of the lesser-known gambits the Corporation's engaging in. I can lie damn persuasively, Engel; it's my business."

Engel said nothing. Kennedy no-

ticed that the man's fingernails had been bitten ragged. He felt sorry for the unfortunate linguist, but this was no time for pity.

"Do I get the jeep?"

Engel remained silent. After a long continued silence he pulled in his breath in a sort of sobbing sigh and said, "Yes, damn you."

Kennedy rose. "Thanks, Engel. And listen: I *don't* want you to get hurt in this business. I'm doing what I'm doing because I have to; and I'm stepping on your neck because it's the only neck I can step on—but I'm sorry about the whole filthy thing. If everything goes well, Gunther'll never find out about the dictionary or the jeep."

"Save the apologies," Engel said. "When do you want the jeep?"

Kennedy left after dark-out time that night; the dome was shrouded in night. The faint illumination afforded by Io, and the larger radiation that was Jovelight, only served to cast conflicting and obscuring shadows over the outpost. Engel let him through the lock.

"Remember now," he radioed back. "I'm going to be back here at 0600. Be damn sure you're here to let me in, and that you're alone."

"I'll be here," Engel said. "Alone, I hope."

THE GANNY village was eleven miles to the east of the outpost. Kennedy knew that the aliens had a thirty-two hour sleep-wake cycle, and he hoped that his visit would find them awake; otherwise he might not have another opportunity to speak to them.

No more than twenty minutes after he had left the Terran outpost, he saw what could only be the alien village, nestling between two fangs of rock. It was located, logically enough, along one shore of a broad river of fast-flowing hydrocarbons; the houses were clusters of small dome-shaped ig-

loos put together out of bluish ice-blocks, and there were aliens moving to and fro in the settlement as he drew near.

He cut the jeep's engines a hundred yards from the edge of the river, activated his spacesuit, strapped on his gun and pocketed the dictionary, and stepped outside. He walked toward the river, where half a dozen aliens were casting nets or dangling lines.

As he approached, he saw one man yank forth his line with a catch—a thick-bodied fish-like creature with fierce red eyes and short fleshy fins.

"I am a friend," Kennedy said slowly and clearly, in the Ganny tongue.

They gathered hesitantly about him, those who were not too busy with their nets and their lines. He looked from one noseless grotesque face from the next.

One said, "You are a new one."

"I am. I come to talk with you."

"Talk," the alien said. "And then go. It is the food-gathering time and we are busy."

"You must speak not-fast. Your language is still new to me." Kennedy paused. "I am not a friend of the other men who come to you."

"They will kill you then. They kill those who are not friends."

"Have they killed any of you?"

"No. But they say they will if we do not give them welcome here. We ask them to leave. To go back to the sky. But they say they will bring others of their kind here soon. We do not want them."

"Why not?"

"This is our land. Our tribe chose this as its dying-ground hundreds of days ago. We ask them to go. We ask them to move to another clan-ground. But they will not go. They say they will stay, and bring many hands of hands more of their numbers from the sky."

KENNEDY looked sharply at the ring of aliens. They were stocky beings, not quite his height, lumpy-bodied, with thick six-fingered hands and practically no necks. They were not human. It was strange to stand here in below-zero temperature on a world whose air was poison to his lungs and talk of exploitation with non-human creatures. Nightmarish.

"What will you do if the Earthmen remain on your world?"

"We will fight them."

"Do you have"... Kennedy fumbled for the word, finally resorted to Engel's dictionary... "weapons?"

The alien who was spokesman held forth his gnarled hands. "We have these. We have spears and throwing-sticks. And we have..." It was an untranslatable word meaning *courage, determination, stubbornness, foolhardiness*.

"That won't be enough," Kennedy said. "Not against napalm and thorium grenades."

"What are these words?"

"You'll find out what they mean soon enough," Kennedy said. "Look here—how long will it be before you attack and try to drive the Earthmen away?"

"Why should we tell you?"

"I'm a friend of yours! I want to help you!" The words slipped out suddenly and unexpectedly. "I can bring you weapons of the Earthmen and show you how to use them. I don't want them to trample you down. Do you believe me?"

"You are an Earthman." Stubbornly.

"But I'm not like the others! I'm... I'm..." He stopped. "Look," he said, "When is your next sleep-time?"

"When the silvery moon has set."

The silvery moon meant high-albedo Europa. Kennedy tried to remember the schedule; Europa would set toward "morning," some six or seven

hours from now. Good. He could return the following night at this time, the aliens would be awake.

"I'll come back when you are awake again," he promised. "With Earthman weapons. But this must be kept silent. Do you expect to visit the Earthman-place soon?"

"We would have come when we awoke, but we were told not to come there for five days."

That figured, he thought; that was Gunther's work. Gunther wanted to keep the aliens out of sight until Kennedy was safely on his way back to Earth.

"Say nothing to the other Earthmen of my visits," Kennedy said. "Or else you and I, all of us, will die." He looked at the chronometer in the wrist of his spacesuit. The time was only 0230; he had three hours yet before it was time to return to the outpost.

He asked permission to stay in the village and observe their way of life for a few hours. After a certain amount of whispered discussion, none of which Kennedy was able to understand, they reluctantly agreed.

AT ABOUT 0530, he began driving back westward toward the outpost. In the quiet alien night, the snowfields sparkled and glittered with the reflected light of half a dozen moons; it was a lovely sight, and, inside the warm pressurized cab of the jeep Ted Kennedy felt none of the brutality of the conditions outside—only the silent beauty.

But there was nothing beautiful about the Corporation scheme, he thought. He wondered if he could ever purge himself of the taint of the last two months' work.

The Corporation was using the U. N. as its catspaw. Ganymede was likely territory for exploitation—the Earth had no more simple races left, no more backward areas, thanks to a century

of intensive development; but there still were other worlds for fast-working promoters to conquer.

Kennedy felt clear-headed and tranquil about the part he was going to play in the coming weeks. He would help the Gannys all he could, as partial atonement for all he had done. Perhaps he would remain on Ganymede after the supply ship departed; someday he could tell Marge of what he had done, and she would understand.

He felt good about it. *It isn't everyone, he thought, who has the chance to repair damage he's helped create. If I help the Gannys to defend themselves, aid them, bring them weapons...*

This is their world. They know its pitfalls and its hazards.

A war between armed Gannys and Earthmen clad in cumbersome spacesuits would not necessarily be a one-sided slaughter. Not at all.

And perhaps he could go back to Earth and stop the slaughter before it began. That would be harder. The Corporation was powerful and respected; after all, hadn't its private capital given men the key to space—when none of the nations of the world had found it within their domestic budgets to develop space travel? One man fighting a vast impersonal organization was predoomed to quick failure.

ENGEL WAS waiting inside the airlock as Kennedy brought the jeep up, at 0559 hours. Right on time. The linguist looked pale and tense.

The airlock slid open, and Kennedy guided the jeep through. "Everything's clear," Engel whispered.

Kennedy looked around. "No one knows I've been gone? No one missed me?"

"They've all been sleeping like babes," Engel said. "All except me. I've been sitting in my room staring

at the walls all night. Where the devil did you go—and why?"

"That's hardly public concern, as they say."

Engel assisted Kennedy as he climbed out of the protective suit. Kennedy turned to the linguist and stared quietly at him for a long moment.

"I did something good tonight," he said. "Maybe for the first time in my life. Let's go somewhere where we can't wake people up and I'll tell you all about it."

"I don't want to be a party to your crazy schemes, Kennedy."

"You can decide that after I explain things to you. But I'm going to need your help. And for once in *your* life you can do something worthwhile. More worthwhile than making lists of intransitive verbs, anyway."

13

TWO DAYS that were not days, two nights that were not nights, while the greater darkness of the Ganymedean night cloaked the outpost twenty-four hours out of the twenty-four of the arbitrarily designed "day." And in that time Ted Kennedy became a sneak thief and a traitor to mankind.

Traitor to mankind. He thought about that phrase in the middle of the "night," as the outpost unsuspectingly slept, and he loaded the contents of Weapons Shack Two onto a jetsled, strapped down the guns and flamethrowers and grenades that he was ferrying across the icefields to the village of the Gannys.

He told Engel, "You arrange with Gunther that you get assigned to take me out on my daily tour of the snowdunes and local lakes. Only instead of rubbernecking around, we'll go to the village and show them how to use the stuff we're bringing them."

Engel was unwilling; he scowled

and grimaced and tried to think of reasons why the idea was dangerous; but in the end he agreed, because he was a weak man and both he and Kennedy knew it. Kennedy had long since mastered the art of manipulating People en masse; now he was manipulating one single man, and succeeding at it.

He had five days left on Ganymede. He knew he had to make the most of them.

During the following day, Engel came to him and told him to get ready for his daily drive. They skirted the hills and the big lake west of the camp, then swerved 180 degrees and tracked straight for the Ganny village. They spent two hours there, instructing the aliens in the art of using Earthman weapons.

They taught the pale creatures how to dig in behind snowdrifts and fire at men crossing the plain, how to hurl grenades (they practiced with snowballs; the aliens had unerring aim), how to blister the snow with goutts of flame.

THE ALIENS learned fast. They smiled brightly and said, "Earthmen come we shoot?" and Kennedy nodded and said, "But make sure it's *those* Earthmen and not us."

He wondered what Gunther would say when he found out that the visiting public-relations man had stolen enough spare outpost supplies to equip an entire Ganymedean village. The little man would have an apoplectic fit, certainly.

Third night, Engel had discovered a cache of grenades in an auxiliary storeroom. Gently he carried them out to the sled. Kennedy helped him strap them down. He looked at the time—0330. The outpost slept. No one would be awake until 0700 at the earliest.

"Set the airlock to automatic open-close and let's get out of here," Kennedy called.

The airlock started to slide open.

Kennedy made room on the sled for Engel and rested his hand lightly on the firing switch.

Floodlights suddenly burst out blindingly all over the airlock area. Gunther stood there, looking bleak and bitter in the hard light. Behind him were three other men—Jaeckel, Palmer, Latimer.

"So you're the culprits," Gunther said slowly. "The snortages in the storeroom—the jeeptracks in the snow in the morning. Engel, Kennedy. What the hell do you think you're up to, you two?"

Engel started to say something, something shapeless that was half a moan. Kennedy nudged him viciously.

"Hold on tight! I'm going to get the sled started!"

"Come on, you two, get out of there. I want some explanations!"

"Explanations coming right up," Kennedy said. Calmly he shoved the firing switch to *full* and the thrust-control wide open.

The jetsled bucked and crashed forward in a sudden plunging motion, tossing a spume of flame behind it. Kennedy heard Gunther's angry yell as the sled passed through the open airlock.

THERE WAS the quick harsh chatter of gunfire coming from behind them. Kennedy did not look back; he crouched down low on the sled—praying that none of the shots would touch off the crated grenades lashed to the sled—and guided the little flat sled into the Ganymedean darkness.

His course was already figured. He would circle wide to the west, far enough out to mislead any possible pursuers, and then head for the Ganymedean village.

He forced himself not to think of what would happen to him four days hence, when the supply ship blasted off on its return trip to Earth, and when his own cached supplies in the

Ganny village were exhausted. He had cut loose all bonds with Earth in one sudden frightful moment, and he tried not to think about it.

"I was wondering how long it would take for Gunther to get wise to what we were doing," he said after they had gone more than five miles with no sign of pursuit. "It was bound to happen eventually. But we had to do what we did, Engel. *Someone* had to do it. And it just happened that I came along and dragged you into it."

Engel did not reply. Kennedy wondered about the bitter thoughts the linguist must be thinking. They fled on into the night. When he thought it was safe he changed the sled's course and headed straight for the village.

"None of it would have started if you had kept your dictionary hidden away," Kennedy said. "But you showed it to me, and I borrowed it. I learned a couple of words of Ganny—and on a slim thread like that, you're washed up with the Corporation and I'm finished with the Agency. But I'm not sorry at all. Not even if they catch us, take us back to Earth, and draw and quarter us in Times Square. At least we stood on our hind legs and did something we thought was *right*."

He stopped to consider something. "You *did* think it was right, didn't you? I mean, you didn't help me in this thing just because I was twisting your arm? I hope you did it out of ethical reasons; it's lousy enough to throw away your career in a single week, without having done it just because some other guy with ethics came along and made you do it."

Engel still was silent. His silence began to irritate Kennedy.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "Scared speechless? Did Gunther throw you into such a blue funk you can't talk?"

Still no answer. A cold worm of panic raced once around the interior of

Kennedy's stomach, and he swivelled his neck to see if...

He was right.

One of Gunther's final desperate shots had ripped a neat hole in Engel's breathing-helmet.

ENGEL'S air supply must have rushed out in one moist foaming burst. Blood had dribbled from his mouth and ears as the internal suit-pressure dropped from the 14.7 psi of the suit to the much lower external pressure. Engel's face was blotchy, puffed, swollen, eyes bulging, thin lips drawn back in a contorted grotesque smile.

He had died in a hurry—so fast that he had not even had time to grunt an anguished last cry into his open suit-microphone.

Kennedy compressed his lips into a thin bitter scowl. Engel had been so proud of his dictionary, so anxious to show it off to the visitor from Earth. And a couple of weeks later that dictionary had worked his death, as surely as if it had been the bullet that sent his air-supply wailing out into the desolate night of Ganymede.

He stopped by a wide-stretching lake whose "waters" glittered in the light of three whirling moons. Kennedy gently lifted Engel's oddly-light body from the sled and carried it to where the dark liquid lapped the edge of the ragged shore.

He waded out a foot or two in the lake and laid Engel face-down on the surface of the water. He drifted; Kennedy touched one gauntlet to the dead man's boot and shoved, imparting enough force to send Engel floating slowly but inexorably out toward the middle of the lake.

To Kennedy's horror the body remained afloat for some minutes, spinning in a lazy circle as the currents of the lake played games with it. But finally the methane came bubbling in through the holes in his breathing-helmet, the spacesuit lost its buoyancy

and grew heavy, filling with liquid until Engel slowly and gravely vanished beneath the surface.

Ted Kennedy remounted the sled and continued on.

HE WAS STILL a mile from the Ganny-village when he saw the brightness in the sky. Those flares of light streaking the dark sky could only be flames.

He approached the village, coming down on it laterally out of the row of razorbacked ridges that bordered it on the south. When he was close enough, he could see clearly what was taking place.

The big truck from the outpost had drawn up perhaps fifty or a hundred yards from the first houses of the village, and for dark spacesuited figures crouched around it, two behind the rear wheels, one on each side in front. They held guns and they were firing repeatedly into the village.

But the villagers were answering back.

Kennedy saw, lying not far from the truck, the shattered blurred figure of what had been a man in a spacesuit, sprawled in a drak greasy puddle. As he watched, a runnel of flame came spitting forth from a snowdune diagonally north of the truck, and one of the Earthmen whirled and fired six times sharply in the direction of the alien flamethrower.

Kennedy caught his breath. Gunther had come directly to the village in search of them—and the villagers, thinking this was the long-awaited attack, had opened fire. The Earthmen now were concentrating on defense. A pyre burned skyward in the heart of the village where his ammunition dump had been—a lucky shot, perhaps.

He smiled at the bravery of the troops, his Ganymedean Irregulars. But Gunther was angry, and would wipe out the lot of them before long.

A grenade came spiralling out of the village and crashed to the ground near the right front wheel of the outpost truck. Kennedy saw an Earthman dodge to avoid the explosion, and get out of the way just in time.

He thought momentarily of making use of his sledload of grenades in the aliens' defense, but decided against it. Their defeat was inevitable; they might take some Terran lives, but Gunther would show no mercy, and the outcome would not be in doubt. The villagers were brave creatures, but a week's instruction in the arts of war would be of little help over a long-run siege.

Instead Kennedy nudged with his chin the control of his suit-microphone and said, "Gunther?"

"Who's that?"

"Kennedy. Hold your fire."

"Where are you, Kennedy?"

On the hill overlooking you. I could kill you all with three grenades. But don't fire; I don't want to cause any more deaths."

"Damn you, have you gone crazy? Do you know that Latimer's dead and half the village is destroyed on account of you? We came here looking for you and Engel, and they opened fire on us."

Kennedy frowned. "I don't want to cause any more deaths. I'm surrendering. Got that? Surrendering. I'll come down out of the hills with my hands up. Don't fire at the villagers any more. They aren't to blame."

He rose from the shed and slowly made his way down the side of the hill, a dark figure against the whiteness. He was no more than halfway down when Gunther's voice said sharply, "Wait a minute! You're alone. Where's Engel? If this is some sort of trick..."

"Engel's dead. You killed him back at the airlock when we escaped, and I gave him burial in a lake half an hour back beyond the hills. I'm coming down alone."

14

THE CORPORATION space-ship had not been intended as a prison ship, and so they had no facilities for confining Kennedy. He ate alone, and spoke to the other men aboard the ship only when absolutely necessary. On their part, they spoke to him not at all.

The last few days before the departure of the supply ship had been rough ones. Gunther had ordered Kennedy confined to his bare little room, with a guard posted outside the door twenty-four hours a "day," and meals brought in.

Gunther had questioned him. "You gave weapons to the aliens, Kennedy?"

"I decline to answer."

"The hell with that. Did you?"

"Your guess is as good as anybody's, Gunther."

"Who are you? What's behind you, Kennedy? Tell me why you gave guns to the Gannys!"

"I never admitted I did."

"Damn you, don't you realize that two Earthmen died in that little sortie, and half a Ganny village was burned to flinders? Not to mention Engel. That makes three dead Earthmen on your account."

Kennedy shrugged. After a while, Gunther gave up.

They treated him fairly enough, he had to admit; a lesser man might have killed him on the spot, but Gunther was not petty. He was sending Kennedy back to Earth to let the Corporation and the Agency be his judges.

Sizer gave him a gravalol injection on the way out, which surprised him a little; it was reasonable to assume that they'd leave a traitor to cope with the agonies of blast-off acceleration as best he could.

The day of Earthfall came. Word passed rapidly through the ship, and Sizer, grim-faced now, with none of the

cheerful affability of the earlier journey, came aft to offer him the needle. But Ted Kennedy shook his head.

"I'll skip that stuff on the way down. I want to find out what it really feels like to make a planetfall. This may be my last chance to find out."

Sizer shrugged. "It's your body, your bones, and your nerves. Suit yourself."

SO THEY let him ride down into the atmospheric blanket fully conscious. The ship's jets thundered, stabilizing her, decelerating her. Kennedy felt as if two broad hands were squeezing him together, jamming his neck against his spine, flattening his face, distorting his mouth. He could hear the currents of blood in his body. He gasped for breath like a hooked fish. It seemed that there was a mighty knuckle pressing against his chest, expelling the air from his lungs, keeping him from drawing breath.

He drew a breath. And another.

He swung in the cradle. Waves of pain shivered through him.

He started to black out. He fought it, clinging tightly to consciousness.

And he stayed awake.

The ship was trembling now, shuddering in the last moments of landing. He did not look out the port, but he knew the ground must be visible now, pitching wildly beneath the ship. He could picture the sleek ship standing perched on a tongue of fire.

They dropped down. Kennedy wiped a trickle of blood from his upper lip. He became aware abruptly of a roaring silence, and realized that the bellow of the jets had at last ceased.

They had landed. And he had not blanked out.

Now he rolled over and looked through the port. He saw people out there. He looked for Marge or Watsinski or Spalding, but saw no one he recognized, no familiar face.

A voice said quietly inside him, *If you run fast enough they can't touch*

you. It's no crime to give guns to the Gannys. The Corporation hasn't started making the law. Not yet.

The big hatch in the wall of the ship was opening; a catwalk was extruding itself automatically so the men in the ship could reach the ground twenty feet below. Very carefully, Kennedy unlaced the webbing that held him in the deceleration cradle. He dropped one foot over the side of the hammock, then the other, and went yawing forward suddenly as the wall of the ship came sweeping up to meet him.

He thrust out his hands desperately, slapped them against the wall, steadied himself. He waited a moment until his head stopped pounding and his feet were less rubbery.

Kennedy smiled. He was under no indictment; perhaps the people at the port still knew nothing of the happenings on Ganymede. Quite calmly he made his way forward to the hatch and lowered himself down the catwalk to the ground. The sun was warm and bright; he had forgotten the day, but he knew it would have to be somewhere near the end of July. The sickly heat of midsummer hung over the flat grounds of the landing-field.

HE HEARD a shout come from behind him, in the ship, and began to run. There was only one direction to go—toward the waiting people. A galaxy of flashbulbs went nova as he approached. People, dozens of them, probably Corporation men, Agency men...

"You're Kennedy, aren't you? Could I have a brief statement on..."

"Would you say a word for the video audience..."

Kennedy shouldered past them. "Please. I'm very tired. I can't stay here and talk to you."

He felt dazed by the heat after the chill of Ganymede. A taxi lingered beyond, he saw, and he trotted toward it. A shout went up from behind him,

"Stop that man! Don't let him get away! Stop him!"

He opened the taxi and slipped into the passenger's seat "Let's get out of here fast." He glanced out the window and saw men racing toward him—Hills, Sizer.

The cab rolled away. Smiling, Kennedy looked back at his pursuers, wondering if he would be followed. It had been so simple to slip away, in the confusion of landing; they had never really had a chance.

Like a dream, he thought, where the figures reach out to clutch you—but you slip through them like a red-hot blade through butter.

They would hunt him, of course; escape could never be this simple. But, at least, he would have a few minutes or a few days of freedom, and perhaps he could accomplish some of the things he had returned to Earth to do.

Where can I go? he wondered.

HOME WAS the most obvious place. So obvious, in fact that the pursuers might never suspect he would go there. He gave the cabby his home address.

The house looked the same as ever, he thought, as the cab pulled into the Connecticut township where he and Marge had lived so long. *Odd she wasn't out there to welcome me back,* he thought. *Everyone else seemed to know this was the day the Ganymede ship was supposed to get back.*

Maybe Gunther radioed ahead. Maybe they had intentionally let him slip away at the spaceport, knowing that they could always pick him up at home. He gave the driver much too big a bill and without waiting for change headed up the drive into his garden.

The house looked quiet. He found his key in his trouser pocket, pressed it into the slot, and held his right thumb against the upper thumbplate until the front door slid back. He stepped inside.

"Marge?"

No answer. He half expected an answering rattle of gunfire, or the sudden appearance of the Corporation gendarmerie, but the house remained silent. Only the steady purr of the electronic dust-eater was audible. He went on into the living room, hoping at least to find the cat sleeping in the big armchair, but there was no cat. Everything was tidy and in its place. The windows opaqued.

The windows were opaqued! Kennedy felt a twinge of shock. They never opaqued the windows except when they expected to be away for long periods of time, on vacations, long shopping, tours. Marge would never have left the windows opaqued in the middle of the day like that...

Suspicion began to form. He saw a piece of paper sitting on the coffee-table in the living room. He picked it up.

It was a note, in Marge's handwriting, but more shaky than usual. All it said was, "*Ted, there's a tape on the recorder. Please listen to it. Marge.*"

His hands trembled slightly as he switched on the sound system and activated the tape recorder.

"*Ted, this is Marge speaking to you—for what's going to be the last time. I was going to put this in the form of a note, but I thought using the recorder would let me make things a little clearer.*

"*Ted, I'm leaving. It's not a hasty step. I thought about it a long time, and when this Ganymede business came up everything seemed to crystallize. We just shouldn't be living together. Oh, it was nice at times—don't get me wrong. But there's such a fundamental difference in our outlooks toward things that a break had to be made—now, before it was too late to make it.*

"*You worked on the Ganymede thing casually, lightheartedly—and*

didn't realize that I was bitterly opposed to it. Things like that. I'm not leaving you because of a difference in politics, or anything else. Let's just say that the Ganymede job was a symptom, not a cause, of the trouble in our marriage. I hated the Contract and what it stood for. You didn't even bother to examine the meaning of it. So today—the day you left for space, Ted—I'm leaving.

"*I'm going away with Dave Spalding. Don't jump to conclusions, though—I wasn't cheating on you with Dave ever. I have my code and I live by it. But we did discuss the idea of going away together, and your leaving for Ganymede has made it possible. That's why I wanted you to go. Please don't be hurt by all this—please don't smash things up and curse. Play the tape a couple of times; and think about things. I don't want anything that's in the house; I took what I wanted to keep, and the rest is yours. After you've had time to get used to everything I'll get in touch with you about the divorce.*

"*So that's it, Ted. It was grand while it lasted, but I knew it couldn't stay grand much longer, and to spare both of us fifty or sixty years of bitterness I've pulled out. Dave has left the Agency, but we have a little money that we've both saved. Again, Ted, I'm sorry—sorry for both of us.*

"*I left the cat with the Camerons; and you can get him back from them when you get back from Ganymede. Nobody but you and Dave and me knows what's happened. Take care of yourself, Ted. And so long.*"

He let the tape run down to the end when it was finished, and shut it off. Then he stood numbly in the middle of the room for a long while, and after that he played the tape over once again from beginning to end.

"I didn't expect that, Marge," he said quietly. His throat felt very dry. His eyes ached; but he did not cry at all.

15

HE POURED himself a drink, and even that was not without its painful contingent memories, because Marge had always poured his drinks for him. Then he took off his shoes and listened to the tape a third time.

This time around he was able to stop hearing Marge's words and listened to the way she was saying them: straightforwardly, with little hesitation or emotional quaver. These were words she had stored within her a long time, he realized, and she seemed almost happy to relieve herself of them.

Some minutes passed, and the first rough shock ebbed away. He looked at it almost philosophically now. It *had* been inevitable. She had acted with great strength and wisdom, and he respected her for it.

But he felt bitter over one thing: that he had not returned from Ganyমে a changed man—a man who had not only shifted his stand but who had taken positive action in his new allegiance—and Marge was not here to commend him for seeing her point at last. His conversion had come too late for that. There was no point chasing after her, finding her, saying, "Look, Marge, I've repudiated the Corporation finally and the Agency—won't you come back now?"

No. It was too late to wave his new-found allegiance and expect Marge to forgive all his old blunders.

It hurt, but he forced himself to forget her.

He rose, crossing the room, and snapped on the video. He searched for a newscast and finally found one on Channel 72, the Bridgeport UHF channel. He listened patiently through the usual guff about the miserable late-July weather, hot and humid despite the best efforts of the Bureau of Weather Adjustment, and to an analy-

sis of the new cabinet crisis in Yugoslavia.

Then the newscaster paused and said, "Spacefield Seven in New Jersey was the scene several hours ago of the arrival from Ganyমে of Captain Louis Hills' space ferry, which had made its last trip to Ganyমে three weeks ago laden with supplies for the colony there. Captain Hills reported all well on the tiny world. In an afternoon baseball game, the Red Sox defeated the..."

Kennedy shut the set off. So they had decided to keep all news of him hushed up. He started to form plans. Today was July 30. On October 11, the Corporation would go before the U.N. to ask for armed intervention. He had until then to puncture the fabric of lies he had helped erect.

But he would have to move warily. The Corporation would be looking for him, anxious to shut him up before he could damage the project. And probably the U.N. Security Police would be on the alert for him. The Greater New York area was going to be unsafe for a while.

There was one place he could go. His earlier home; Wisconsin. He could hide there.

HE PACKED a single suitcase, taking just one change of clothes and a few toilet articles. He left everything else untouched—the bar, the kitchen, the whole house.

He waited just a moment, gathering his strength, and took a last quick look at the house he and Marge had picked together eight years before, and which he might never see again.

He was leaving the past behind. Marge, the cat, his books, his records—all the things he had treasured. The solid, secure life for which he had long been smugly thankful, gone.

There was a gun in his night-table drawer, a snubnosed .38. He never used it. Fully loaded, it had rested in

the drawer; now he slipped it into the shoulder-holster and donned it. The time was 16:32, Monday, July 30 2044.

It was not safe to call the airline from his house; they might be monitoring his phone. He locked the front door, looked around carefully, and stowed his luggage in the car.

Ten minutes later, he was in town. He parked his car outside Schiller's, the township pharmacy, and went in.

He put a quarter on the counter. "Two phone tokens, Max."

"Sure. Oh, hello, Mr. Kennedy." Schiller wiped his hands on his stained white smock and said, "Couple of men were in here just a minute ago asking for you. Wanted to know how to get out to your place. I had my boy show them."

"I'm not expecting anyone," Kennedy said. He took the tokens from the counter.

"Hey, there they are!" Schiller exclaimed, pointing.

Through the plate-glass front window Kennedy saw two men in dark brown business suits and austere violet traveling-cloaks, coming out of the bank. They were cold-looking and efficient men; Corporation men, Kennedy thought. He started to walk quickly toward the telephone booths.

"Hey, Mr. Kennedy," Schiller called. "You better go out there and see those fellers before they get into their car and go chasin' all the way out to your place."

"I don't have time to see them; I've got to get into the city on some important business."

Kennedy dialed the ticket-deck at Roosevelt Airport and reserved a single seat on a flight for Milwaukee leaving at 1951 that evening. He gave his name as Victor Engel.

As he left the booth, Schiller said, "Those friends of yours drove off toward your place while you were on the phone."

Kennedy grinned. "I just didn't have

time to see them. I have to get down to the city in a hurry; my boat leaves at 19:00."

"Boat?"

"I'm going to Europe on company business. Don't tell a soul; I really don't want it getting around or all my friends will expect me to bring back souvenirs."

AS HE DROVE rapidly down the Thruway toward New York, he thought about the two bleak-faced Corporation men. They were certain to come back to town, once they found his house empty; perhaps they would stop in Schiller's again, and in that case they were certain to get drawn into conversation with Max.

He hoped they had a nice time looking for him on the departing boats to Europe.

He took the artery that led out along the south shore of Long Island Sound and reached the airport at 17:47. He left his car in the parking area, made his way toward the shining plastic building that housed the central ticket offices, and claimed his ticket. Departure time was 19:51.

He ate in an automatic restaurant—a light meal, protoid sandwich and mild, for he was far from hungry just now—and bought an evening 'fax-sheet at a vending stand. He found a squib on the return of the Ganymede ship, but no mention of the public-relations man who had fled the space-field. He crumpled the 'fax sheet and threw it away.

The heat of day died down and departure time drew near. At 1925 the announcement came, "Universal Airlines plane for Milwaukee, Flight 165, now loading at Gate 17."

The ship was not the newest model—an FB-9, seating ninety, a fairly low-ceiling liner.

After spaceflight, airplane flying seemed odd to Kennedy—oddly clumsy and oddly unsafe. The plane took off on schedule, roaring down the runway

and veering sharply upward into the sky; he looked down to the darkening streets of Brooklyn and saw tiny dots that were autos passing below, and then Brooklyn passed out of sight as the ship stabilized at its flight altitude of 20,000 feet.

At that height they were well above the clouds, which formed a solid gray-white floor stretching to the horizon, billowing up here and there in puffs that looked like ice-floes on a frozen sea.

Sooner than he expected, they were in Milwaukee; his watch read 22:13, but he jabbed the setting stud to put the hands back an hour, to conform with local time.

The Milwaukee airport probably had been a local wonder a century before; now, it merely looked cheap and shabby, a weathered old edifice of green glass and plastic. Kennedy treated himself to a cup of synthetic caffeine drink in one of the airport restaurants, and considered his next several steps.

It was an hour's drive from Milwaukee to Brockhurst, where he had been born and where his older brother still lived. But it was late, and he felt hesitant about barging in on them unannounced when he knew he could not get out there much before midnight.

Instead of going out there, Ted Kennedy took a cab to town and rented a room in the first hotel he found. In the morning he dialed his brother's number as soon as he was up, at 08:00.

A GRUFF, deep voice said, "Kennedy speaking. Who's this?"

"Kennedy, this is Kennedy. Of the Connecticut Kennedys, you know."

A moment of silence. Then: "Ted?"

"None other."

"Where are you?"

"In the Hotel Avon in good old Milwaukee. I got in late last night too late to call."

"So the first time in five years you decide to visit your poor relations, and

you don't even give us a word of warning, huh? You bring Marge?"

"No. I came alone, and in something of a hurry. Look, Steve, I'd like to stay with you for a while. And I can't explain over the phone."

"You come right on out here, then. I'll take the day off for you. And we'll have the extra room fixed up for you when you get here. Hurry it up, now."

Kennedy caught the next bus.

Steve was eleven years his senior, and, since their father had died when Ted was seven, had fairly well served as his guide through boyhood. Steve was the salt-of-the-earth type, hearty big-bodied and smiling, with a fondness for beer and fishing excursions. He was a faithful churchgoer. He had quarrelled endlessly with his brother, until Ted, more nervous by temperament, introverted and intellectual, had left home after high school, gone to Chicago, enrolled in Northwestern.

The brothers had met just once since Kennedy's marriage to Marge—in 2039, when a vacation trip of Steve's had brought him eastward. Since that time, Kennedy had exchanged letters with his brother sporadically, but as the years passed they had had less and less to say to each other. It was nearly ten months since he had last written to Steve.

He reached Brockhurst a little after 10:00 that morning.

Steve was on the porch of his home waiting for him when he crossed off Main onto Willoughby. Betty was at his side—at least Kennedy assumed that the cheerful bovine woman in the thin print dress was Betty; he had quite forgotten her face—and two boys of about nine and thirteen were having catch in the front yard.

Steve had grown gray, Kennedy noticed, but he still looked impressive—a big-muscled thick-bodied man with deep sad eyes that belied the essentially untroubled mind behind them. He took the suitcase with his left hand and

squeezed Kennedy's right hand mercifully with his other.

THEY GAVE him a room overlooking the field behind the house—a small room, homey, with a crucifix and a knitted motto on the wall. When he had unpacked his few belongings he returned downstairs and called them in off the porch.

Inside, in the living-room, he leaned forward in the old overstuffed chair and said quietly, "I guess I owe you all some explanations."

"Heck, Ted, you damn well know you can drop in on us any time you..."

"No. Listen to me, and if you don't want me to stay here say so. I'm in a little trouble back East. Marge isn't with me any more, though that's only part of it. You know something of the sort of work I do—public relations? Well, I happened to uncover a sort of a swindle that was being put over on the public, that my company was helping out in."

He carefully toned his vocabulary down to make everything perfectly clear to them. "I stumbled over the evidence, and like an idiot popped off at the wrong time. So there are some big people in New York anxious to get hold of me and shut me up. They think I ran off to Europe; they have no idea—I hope—where I really am. I came out here traveling under a fake name. But here's the main point: at the end of September I'm going to take what I know up before the United Nations—yes, it's that big—and expose the whole filthy mess. But I need a place to hide until then. Not really, hide, but just a place to stay and live without attracting much attention, preferably far from New York.

"In two months I'm going to go back East and expose the works, or die trying. Now, you've got a nice home and five swell kids, and I know you don't want anything to happen to them or you. I'll put it to you bluntly: there's always a chance they might find out

where I am, and come and get me. In that case there may be trouble. Okay. I'd like to stay here. But be honest with me, because I can always go somewhere else if you don't want to run the risk of having me."

It had been a long speech; his lips were dry when he finished. He looked from his brother to Betty, and back. They exchanged glances.

Finally Steve scratched one ear and said slowly, "I was always afraid you'd get mixed up in something bad, Ted. I tried to teach you to do your day's work and leave well enough alone, but I guess it never really took; or else the people down East taught you different. You really seem to be pokin' round hornet's nests now."

Kennedy nodded. "I am. But tell me..."

"I'm tellin' you. For ten years now I kept thinking you were too fancy-pants to call on me when you might need me. But I guess you just didn't need me till now. And this would be a lousy time to kick you in the teeth in return, eh, Ted? Sure, you can stay. Stay as long as you need to. What's the good of having brothers if a man doesn't take a risk for them once in a while?"

16

THE SUMMER days slipped by, July giving way to a blistering August when heat hung heavy over the flat Wisconsin farmlands. Ted Kennedy lived quietly, reading a great deal, thinking, occasionally accompanying Steve on his salesman's rounds, playing with the five Kennedy children. He was accepted by all as a member of the household. He kept a close watch on all the communications media.

The news-sheets and telefaxes were chiefly concerned with local news, the heat wave, the prospects for the fall. But there were hints here and there.

Every newspaper carried a daily box telling the latest news from the Ganymede colony (Kennedy wondered who was carrying the hoax on—Watsinski, most likely)—and the character of the news had taken on a distinct new coloration.

Now there was word of sinister alien armies marching beyond the hills, of bomb detonations and the dry sound of target practice. "The aliens are becoming very resentful of our presence," wrote Colony Director Lester Brookman in the column that appeared August 11. "Although we have little contact with them, they object to our presence on their world and have several times made ugly threats. During the present crisis, we do not permit members of the colony to leave the dome in groups of less than three."

It was proceeding according to plan, Kennedy thought. The hostile aliens were on the warpath; soon they would be hunting for scalps; then would come the massacre. After that, troops would be called in to wipe out the beligerent savages. It was an old, old pattern of colonial expansion.

He knew the schedule. By September 17, the world would know that the colony of Earthmen was in imminent danger of being wiped out by the aliens. On September 22, the Corporation would make preliminary overtures toward the United Nations, asking for a police force to be sent to Ganymede to guard Terran interests. It would not be too strong a plea, for the public needed more manipulating. From September 22 through October 10, the world would pray for the endangered Earthmen; on October 11, the aliens would sweep down from the hills and virtually wipe out the colony.

And, by October 17, United Nations troops would be on their way to Ganymede to quell the disturbance and police the world to make it safe for the Corporation.

The summer rolled on. If there were a hunt in progress for him, it was an extraordinarily secret one. He had never spent two less troubled months.

HE WAS AT home Sunday afternoon, September 17, when the news came forth from every medium: *GANYMEDE COLONY ATTACKED!*

"A surprise alien attack shortly before dawn Ganymede time left the Earth colony on Jupiter's moon in grave peril today. An estimated five thousand aliens, armed with clubs and native weapons, swept down on the dome that houses the colony. Colony Director Lester Brookman radioed later in the day that the assault had been beaten back, with the loss of three Earth lives and considerable damage to the colony."

Betty Kennedy was pale and distraught as the newsbreak ended. "That's *horrible!* Those poor people—fighting against those savages!"

"Couple of fellows were talking today about how maybe the U. N.'s going to send troops up there to keep everything peaceful," Steve said. "But they better hurry if they're going to do it, or there'll be an old-fashioned massacre."

Ted Kennedy frowned tightly and said nothing. He wanted to tell his brother and sister-in-law that their fears were for nothing, that there was no colony up there, that this whole alien attack had been created on a public-relations agency's drawing-boards months before, and neatly calculated to be sprung this day. But he could not tell them that.

Instead he said. "I'll be going back to the city on Tuesday, Steve."

They argued with him, tried to make him stay longer, but he stonily insisted that the time had come for him to return. It had been a splendid visit, he

told them with sincerity, but he was needed elsewhere. After a protracted farewell scene, he put the town of Brockhurst, Wisconsin behind him a second time. Steve drove him to Milwaukee early Tuesday morning, and "Victor Engel" took an 11:21 plane to New York.

IT WAS EARLY afternoon when he arrived. He had grown a mustache in Brockhurst, and his long Agency haircut had given way to a midwestern trim that left the back of his neck and his ears bare. Anyone looking for him would try to identify him by the thick mane he had worn in the spring, and that was gone. He had also picked up a heavy tan in Wisconsin. None of these things would serve as an absolute disguise, but they would all help him to avoid being recognized during the next two weeks.

He rented a room in Manhattan, in a dreary old slum of a hotel in the mid-sixties overlooking the East River. The name he gave was Victor Engel of Brockhurst, Wisconsin.

Thursday passed. On Friday the 22nd, on schedule, the representatives of the Corporation appeared before the newly-convened session of the General Assembly to lay the groundwork for a possible request for United Nations intervention on Ganymede. The plot was ripening; the climax drew near.

Kennedy read the text in Saturday's papers. They were following Dinoli's original timetable perfectly. The next two weeks were slated to be ones of increasing peril for the little colony, culminating in the final massacre of October 11.

That evening, Saturday, September 23, Kennedy set out from his mid-Manhattan hotel room, planning to add burglary to the list of crimes he had already committed.

It was a warm, muggy night, but he wore his jacket anyway, to conceal the

.38 strapped under his arm. He took the up-town bus along the Second Avenue Skyway, getting off at East 122nd Street. The business district, on a Saturday evening, was utterly deserted.

HE TURNED up East 123rd to Lenox, and the office building that housed Steward & Dinoli was before him. He passed through the open front door and was met immediately by an inner barrier. He had a key to it, but the key would work only if his thumbprint were registered in the building's central file, down in the basement computer banks. It was a long chance—but removing a print from the computer banks was a troublesome business, and perhaps they had neglected to do it.

He inserted his key and touched his thumb to the plate. The lock clicked; he pushed against the door and it swung back into its niche. They had not bothered to remove his thumbprint from the file after all.

He moved silently through the ghostly building, taking the stairs rather than the elevator. There was a concealed camera in the elevator that photographed all weekend users; he preferred not to have them get a record of his altered appearance.) Eight, nine, ten...eleven.

He used his key and his thumbprint again and let himself into the office. The lights were off, the windows opaqued. Quietly, he made his way past the outer desks to his old cubicle. He clicked on the pocket flash he had brought and quickly gathered together the materials he wanted:

Dinoli's bulletin quoting the timetable for the unfolding of the project.

The volume of characterizations of colonists he and Spalding had compiled.

Half a dozen damning interoffice memoranda.

His own master chart for developing crises in the day-to-day life of the Ganymede colonists.

It made a heavy little bundle. He shuffled it all together, found a big envelope and shoved them all in, and looked around. He had enough material here to explode the Ganymede hoax from top to bottom. The whole thing was here in all its cynical completeness.

Kennedy smiled. It would not be hard for them to discover who it was who had entered the building Saturday night, once they learned of the theft: all they had to do was run a check of the computer banks and they could learn that the thumbprint of Third-Level Executive Theodore Kennedy had been used to open the doors. But by then it would no longer matter.

He shuffled away, softly, out of the office and down the stairs, and back to his hotel-room with his precious documents. He would need photostats, but he knew where he could get a quick job, even on Sunday.

17

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, was a dark, rain-shadowed day that began poorly and grew worse; the dawn drizzle developed into a full-sized autumn squall by 09:00. Kennedy reflected that the Bureau of Weather Adjustment had always been better at making rain than in heading it off.

By 09:00, though, he was safely out of the reach of the storm. He was in the lobby of the eighty-six story United Nations Secretariat Building on 43rd Street, clutching a thick parcel wrapped in protective plastic under one arm. He was waiting for Harrison M. Flaherty, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative to the United Nations from the United States of America, to arrive at his office. Flaherty's private

secretary had said the delegate normally reached the U.N. by 0915.

At 09:17, Kennedy made his way across the shining floor of the lobby to the great communicator panel of the Secretariat Building. He rang Flaherty's office again. "Has Mr. Flaherty arrived yet? This is Mr. Kennedy."

"Yes, the Ambassador got here just a few minutes ago. Would you come up, please, Mr. Kennedy?"

Kennedy had given his real name in hopes of getting an immediate hearing. "I'll be right up."

He took the elevator to the forty-second floor, got off, and found himself in the offices of the American delegation.

A receptionist, busy with switchboard plugs, glanced up at him. "Mr. Kennedy?"

"That's right."

He felt strong arms grip him, turned halfway, saw three men in the drab uniform of the United Nations Security Police behind him. One held a drawn gun. A second was efficiently frisking him, while a third held his arms immobile.

"You're Kennedy of S&D, aren't you? Wanted for treason, unlawful escape, breaking and entering, and half a dozen other things. Take that package from him, Mike."

"Hold on! I came up here to see the Ambassador! You can't just grab me like this!"

KENNEDY began to sweat. He reached out as if to recapture the package they had taken from him, and felt his arm being jerked sharply upward. They were just blockheaded enough to drag him off to jail right now, he thought, without giving him even the chance to speak to Flaherty.

"I have to see the Ambassador, you idiots! Why do you think I gave my own name? There are easier ways of getting myself arrested!"

"You'll have to come with us," the Security man insisted.

"Just one minute," said a calm, deep voice. "What's happening here?"

Looking up, Kennedy saw the bulky, impressive, gray-maned figure of Harrison Flaherty standing at the door to an inner office. He wore a bright governmental cape with flaring shoulder-crests, and he looked angry.

Advancing toward him from the opposite direction came a thinner, younger man. Kennedy recognized him as Flaherty's private secretary.

"This man called from below and said he was Theodore Kennedy of the Steward & Dinoli agency, and wanted to see you. I made a routine call to S&D and a second-level man told me that yes, there had been a Kennedy working there, but he'd been a fugitive since July and was wanted for treason and half a dozen other things, and would we make sure he didn't get away this time. So I alerted three Security men to catch him when he came in."

Flaherty frowned puzzledly. Quickly Kennedy said, "I admit everything. I'm the Kennedy they want. But I have to see you, Mr. Flaherty. Or at least, to have you look through the papers in the package that goon is holding."

"Why are these papers so important, Mr. Kennedy?"

"Because they'll explain why I've been in hiding since July. They'll explain the hoax that's being put over on the world. You ought to read them before the U.N. votes on sending troops to Ganymede, which is something that's going to happen on October 17."

Flaherty smiled; it was a just-another-crackpot-take-him-away smile. But then he seemed to have an afterthought—or perhaps he detected something believable behind the superficial, wild-eyed appearance that Ted Kennedy knew he must be making.

In a quiet voice he said, "Perhaps I should examine this matter before dismissing it. Officer, give me that

package and escort Mr. Kennedy into my chambers."

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the United Nations Organization in plenary session was an impressive sight. The flags of the ninety-seven member nations decked the hall, and above them all rose the United Nations flag—the World Flag.

The matter of Ganymede was the topic of the agenda, and Juan Hermanos of Chile was presiding. After the gavel fell, opening the session at 13:00, Delegate Flaherty of the United States rose solemnly and asked for the floor.

"The topic most frequently discussed before this organization in recent months is that of Ganymede, the moon of Jupiter, on which a colony of Earthborn men and women has been planted. This colony has been planted by the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration Corporation, whose Mr. Bullard I see in the group before me. The work of the Corporation is well known. Applying private capital where public financing was impossible, the Corporation gave mankind the key to the stars. From its laboratories came the ships that first reached the moon, our sister planets Mars and Venus, and lately Ganymede. From its training-schools came the men who piloted these ships. From among its ranks was chosen the few hundred who comprise the colony on Ganymede, the colony whose privations and dangers we all have followed with such keen interest since public announcement of its existence was made last spring.

"In short the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration Corporation has, in the past fifty years, become virtually a supranational state, with lands of its own, police of its own, now a spacefleet of its own. This sort of private enterprise is considered commendable by current standards, since we all know the officers of the Corpo-

ration have long worked in the best interests of humanity.

"But this morning, as I prepared myself for the day's work a visitor came to me, a young man who has been active in the task of disseminating news of the Corporation's recent programs. He brought some rather startling papers with him. I have looked through them, and I can attest they are genuine.

"I believe it now becomes necessary to re-evaluate our entire set of beliefs, not only in the matter of Ganymede but in the matter of Corporation activity in general. I would like to yield place, if it be so resolved by this body, to Mr. Theodore Kennedy, Executive Third Level of the public-relations firm of Steward & Dinoli of this city."

The formality took a moment; Kennedy was given the floor. He rose in his place at Flaherty's left, nudging the chair back clumsily. His throat felt dry.

The delegates were staring at him, some with curiosity, some in boredom. In the glare of the lights he managed to pick out the thick, coarse face of Bullard, the Corporation's First Level man. Bullard was leaning forward; his eyes seemed to have attained demonic intensity.

KENNEDY said, "These papers I hold here give documentary proof of the most wide-scale hoax perpetrated in modern history. But before I distribute photostatic copies to you, and let you judge for yourselves, let me briefly state my qualifications for the task I now undertake, and a summary of the charges I intend to make against the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration Corporation.

"I have been on Ganymede—from July 5 to 30 of this year. I have seen the planet with my own eyes. I have also helped in the fabrication of this hoax.

"Point One: The Corporation is will-

fully deceiving the people of the world.

"Point Two: There is not, and never has been, a colony of men and women on Ganymede. There is a Corporation outpost, which consisted of sixteen men in Corporation employ at the time I was there.

"Point Three: The natives of Ganymede are actively opposed to the exploitation of their world by the Corporation or by any other Earth people, and have declared this repeatedly to the members of the Outpost there.

"Point Four: The Corporation, realizing that the natives of Ganymede do not wish their continued occupation of the planet to endure, have come to the decision that nothing less than a full-scale war against the intransigent Ganymedeans will be necessary in order to subdue the planet and place it fully in their control. Not even the vast resources of the Corporation are equal to the task of waging this war; nor do they want to dissipate their capital, and tie up men, in what quite possibly would be a guerrilla campaign of great intensity.

"Point Five: Knowing these things, the Corporation engaged the Agency for which I formerly worked, charging them with the task of so manipulating and controlling the sources of news that the true nature of events on Ganymede would be concealed, and that the United Nations could ultimately be induced to carry out an armed intervention in the Corporation's behalf on Ganymede. This campaign has been highly successful. I regret to confess that it was I who originated the central concept of a fictitious colony on Ganymede which would engage the sympathies of the people of Earth—a colony which is scheduled for a fraudulent annihilation on October 11, to serve as provocation for a Corporation request for intervention by United Nations forces."

KENNEDY paused. He had spoken carefully and clearly; and as he

looked around he saw a triple ring of shocked and unbelieving faces. They were starting to mutter; a moment more and there might even be jeers. But he was a master of his trade, and he had timed his speech carefully.

"Perhaps you feel that these charges of mine are the nightmares of a paranoid, despite the fact that Ambassador Flaherty has given me his seal of approval. But I have had prepared photostatic copies of documents which demonstrate amply the shrewd and calculating way in which the Corporation and my Agency—and I, myself—went about the business of hoodwinking an entire world. Members of the American delegation will now pass among you distributing them."

He had waited just a moment too long. A fierce-looking delegate in bright velvet robes stood up and shouted in crisp British tones, "This is an outrage, and I protest! How can such arrant nonsense be tolerated in this hall? How can..."

Kennedy ignored him. He was staring, instead, at Bullard—Bullard whose face had grown increasingly more contorted during his speech; Bullard who had listened in anger to the destruction of the Corporations's plans, Bullard who sat quivering with rage, shaking with the impact of each of Kennedy's statements...

Bullard who was rising now, gun grasped tight in one massive paw...

It was too late for Kennedy to duck. He could only stand and wait as he felt the bullet crash into his shoulder and heard an instant later the strange little 'pop' of Bullard's weapon; then the force of the shot knocked him backward, and as he fell he saw Security men swarming down over the struggling Bullard and heard the loud bewildered shouts of the delegates—delegates who, in the moment, had had all reality snatched from them, who now confronted the naked core of lies that had been cloaked so long.

18

DIZZILY, TED KENNEDY attempted to rise.

He lay sprawled behind his chair, ignored for a moment in the general confusion. His shoulder seemed to be burning.

He put one hand on the edge of the table and hoisted himself up. Delegates milled about confusedly; Hermandos was pounding the gavel and roaring for order. A flock of Security Policemen surrounded Bullard and were dragging the Corporation man away; Bullard was white-faced with rage. Probably rage at having missed, Kennedy thought.

A quiet voice said, "Are you all right?" The voice belonged to Ambassador Flaherty.

"I think so," Kennedy said. His shoulder throbbed painfully, but he did not seem to be bleeding.

But suddenly he felt weak. His wobbly legs gave way and he groped for the nearest seat and sank into it. He saw the delegation aides moving down the aisles, distributing his photostats. A hum of light conversation replaced the previous agitated buzz of talk.

Flaherty was speaking again.

"In view of the sudden attack upon Mr. Kennedy by the Corporation executive present among us, I think we must not hesitate to take action today. The shot fired at Mr. Kennedy was a tacit admission of guilt.

"I call, therefore, for a full investigation of the relationship between the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration Corporation and the Steward & Dinoli Agencies; I ask furthermore that the charter of the Corporation be temporarily suspended, pending full investigation—and that we consider possible ways and means of establishing direct United Nations control over space travel and interplanetary colonization."

Kennedy smiled despite the pain. What did a bullet in the shoulder matter, more or less, as the price for what he had done?

He turned to Flaherty and started to say something. Before he could get the first word out, though, a wave of pain rippled up and over him, and he struggled unsuccessfully to hold on to consciousness.

For the next few moments he heard dim voices speaking somewhere above him; he was aware someone was was lifting him; then...

WHEN HE WOKE, Kennedy was on a plump leatheroid couch in the inner office of Ambassador Flaherty. His jacket and his bloodstained shirt lay on a nearby chair.

"Ah. He is awake." A pale man in medical uniform bent over him, nodding. "I am Dr. Marquis of the United Nations Medical Staff. The bullet has been removed, Mr. Kennedy. It caused trifling damage. A few days' rest until the soreness leaves, and you'll be all right again."

"Glad to hear it."

He craned his neck until he saw Flaherty. "Well? What did I miss?"

"Plenty. Things have been popping all day. The Security Police paid a visit to Agency headquarters and impounded enough evidence to send your former boss and his friends to the psych-squad. Bullard's in custody here for the attempt on your life. Security forces have taken positions around all Corporation buildings now, to head off the riots."

"Riots?"

"We broke the story to the papers right after you passed out. It caused quite a stir."

Kennedy smiled. "I'll bet it did. Let me see."

They brought him an afternoon edition of a newspaper, and he skimmed quickly through the story.

A New York public-relations executive today blew the lid off the biggest and best-kept hoax in modern history. Testifying before the U. N. General Assembly, Theodore Kennedy, 32, of Steward & Dinoli, revealed to an astonished gathering that the colony supposedly planted on Ganymede was nothing but a public-relations hoax fabricated by his agency. Kennedy charged that the Extraterrestrial Development and Exploration had hired Steward & Dinoli last April to handle the project for them.

As a dramatic climax to the expose, W. Richardson Bullard, 53, an Executive First Level of the Corporation, rose from his seat in the Assembly gallery and fired point-blank at Kennedy, wounding him in the shoulder. Bullard was taken into police custody.

Also rounded up were Louis Dinoli, 66, Executive First Level of the public-relations firm, and the four second level men of the firm, as well as ranking Corporation officials. Further investigation...

Kennedy scanned the rest of the paper. There was a marvelous shot of Dinoli, eyes blazing satanically, being led from the S&D offices by Security men.

THERE WAS much more: pages and pages of it. Pictures of Kennedy, and an amazingly accurate biography of him; a transcript of the entire U. N. session that day; photographs of the Corporation leaders. A long article covered the background of the Ganymede affair from the very first public release back in May, quoting significant passages from the pseudo-accounts of the pseudo-colony. An angry editorial for prompt punishment of the offenders and more effective monitoring of the sources of news in the future to prevent repetitions of this flagrant deception...

"Dinoli never did things in a small

way," Kennedy said, looking up. "His model was the twentieth-century German dictator Hitler. Hitler always said it's harder to fool the people on the small things than on the big ones. You could get them to believe that the continents on the other side of the world had been swallowed up by the ocean a lot easier than you could convince them that the price of meat was going to drop next week. So Dinoli set out to tell the world all about Ganymede. He nearly made it, too."

He handed back the newspapers. He felt very tired, too tired to think, too tired to evaluate what he had done. All he knew was that it was over, now, and he wanted to rest and plan his next move.

"Take me home," he said.

HE WENT home. Flaherty saw to it that there were people on hand to take care of him; he was still too weak to cook for himself and clean up.

He sent one of the U. N. people down the road to the Camerons to fetch the cat. He asked another to help him across the room to the sound system; he wanted to hear music.

He wondered briefly about the consequences of what he had done. Certainly he had finished Steward & Dinoli; a lot of men who were drawing fancy pay would be out looking for jobs tomorrow, if the psych-squads didn't get them.

Haugen, Cameron, Presslie. Probably they would get off easily, pleading that they were only employees and did not set Agency policy. They might draw minor sentences. After that, though, their careers in public relations were just as dead as...

As Ted Kennedy's.

What do I do now?

His name would fade from the front pages in a few days; he knew too much about communications media to believe that his current notoriety would last.

And then...

Few jobs would be open to him. Men who perform public services are rarely remembered for the value of their actions but for the manner of them. Suppose he drifted on to some other agency? They would know he had turned against Dinoli, had broken into the Agency offices late at night to obtain damning evidence. No, Ted Kennedy would not be a safe man to employ.

And one other factor.

He had been through three months of torture, since being assigned to the Gandymede Contract. He had had his eyes opened. He had learned to *think*. He had developed a conscience. A man with a conscience was useless in his line of work. But he was trained for no other profession, and at thirty-two it was too late to start over.

THE PHONE rang suddenly.

The U. N. man answered it. He returned a moment later and said, "It's your wife, Mr. Kennedy. Long distance call. From St. Louis."

"Help me over to the phone," Kennedy said. "No—devil take it, I'll get there on my own steam."

He tottered across the room and into the alcove where the downstairs phone was kept. He looked at the receiver a moment before picking it up.

"Hello—Marge?"

"Hello, Ted. We've just heard the news. We think it's splendid."

"We?"

"Dave and I." She sounded as if she were fighting to keep back tears; her voice was constricted. "I—didn't think you would do it, Ted. Or *could* do it. I—guess I was wrong."

"No. The *me* you knew couldn't have done it. It wasn't till I went to Ganymede that I..." He realized his own voice was quivering. "You're in St. Louis?" he asked.

"Yes. We've been here ever since..."

"Oh. I wondered where you were. Do you ever think of me?"

"A little. Ted..."

"Yes?"

"I just called to let you know how thrilled I was that you did what you did. Dave, too; he says he wouldn't have had courage to do that."

"He has someone he loves," Kennedy said. "I don't blame him for not speaking up."

"But, Ted—I didn't want this call to seem—I mean I..." She hesitated. "Ted, everything I said in that tape still goes. I don't have any regrets. We weren't meant for each other. I don't want any reconciliation."

"Okay," he said. "I wasn't going to ask for one. Send me the divorce papers tonight and I'll sign them as soon as they get here. Okay?"

"Thanks, Ted."

He shrugged, and winced at the pain in his shoulder. He realized that Marge meant very little to him, now; she was part of his past, a past rapidly dwindling into faded shadows. She was nothing to his future.

"So long, Marge."

"So long, Ted. And I'm glad you found it in you to do what you did."

HE HUNG up and turned away from the phone. He felt very relaxed, now. He walked back into the living room.

The U. N. man he had sent down the road to the Camerons for the cat had returned now. He looked apologetic as he said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Kennedy. The Camerons just weren't home, and the neighbors said they wouldn't be home for a long time. I couldn't find the cat. The man in the next house says he thinks it ran away last week."

"That's all right," Kennedy said. Thanks."

He sat down heavily. Poor old cat, he thought; after nearly a decade of civilized life, he had to go back to the jungle. He probably had forgotten how to catch mice in all these years.

But it was just as well. The cat was

part of the past, too—and the past was dropping away, sloughing off and vanishing down the river of time.

No wife, no cat, no job; no past. And fame was fast fleeting. Today he was The Man Who Exposed The Corporation; tomorrow he'd be just another jobless has-been, trying to coast through life on his old press-clippings.

"You know," said the UN man, breaking into Kennedy's thoughts, "what beats me is that they never found where you were hiding out. That firm could have hired the best snoopers in the business, had an army of them tracking you down. You weren't dodging around."

"I took a chance," he admitted, "but not as long a one as you might think. You see, I know how minds work in that business. They knew I was dangerous but they figured I'd either hide away and keep quiet, or start blabbing in such a way that they could shut me up easily."

The UN man nodded. "Figured that if you were honest or idealistic, you must be stupid, huh?"

"That's it. That's the way I would have figured it a year ago, if someone else had tried the same sort of thing. Oh...you can be sure that I wouldn't have been forgotten completely; they'd have arranged something unpleasant for me after the Ganymede intervention was under way. Most likely cook up something to make me out a traitor after the war was on.... Who'd believe my story then?"

His mind drifted back two months, to his short stay on Ganymede. Ganymede had served as the catalyst, as it were, for his change in thinking. On Ganymede...

He frowned thoughtfully. There was, perhaps, one thing he could do; one useful task for him to perform. One job for which he could volunteer.

One job he could do better than any other man on Earth.

He turned to one of the waiting

U. N. men. "Get on the phone," he said. "Call up Ambassador Flaherty. I want to talk to him. Fast."

19

IT HAD BEEN a fine scene, a memorable scene, Kennedy thought, as he relived it in his mind once again. Saturday, the thirtieth of December, 2044—the final day of the year, and Ted Kennedy's final day on Earth.

Spacefield Seven in New Jersey was bright with snow—the soft fluffy sparkling snow of Earth, not the bleak blue-flecked forbidding snow of Ganymede. There had been a heavy fall on Christmas Eve, and most of it still remained in the rural areas.

The spaceship stood tall and proud in the center of the field. Once it had been a Corporation ship; now it belonged to the United Nations. The crew was a Corporation-trained crew, but they had a new loyalty now. The November trails had finished off the Corporation. Space travel was no longer a private monopoly.

In his mind's eye, Kennedy recreated the moment. Flaherty was there, and Secretary-General Isaacs, and most of the other United Nations delegates, plus representatives from every news medium.

Kennedy stood between Flaherty and Isaacs. The Secretary-General was saying, "Your work will be terribly important to us all, Mr. Kennedy. And the peoples of the world may believe this—every word that comes to us from you will go out to humanity exactly as it is received."

The pilots had signalled. The ship was ready. Kennedy made a neat little farewell speech and walked across the snowbright field toward the waiting ship.

Now he thought back over those last minutes of his on Earth. They had waved to him, and he had waved back,

and he had climbed aboard the ship. The crewmen showed him to his hammock with deference.

He declined the gravalol injection. He had lived through one blastoff, and he did not fear another.

Tomorrow on Earth would be a day without a name, a day without a date—the Year-End World Holiday, a day of wild and frenzied joy. His mind went back six months to the midyear World Holiday—that day of black despair, half-forgotten now.

The day after tomorrow would see a new year on Earth. And for him, a new life.

Resident Administrator of the United Nations Trusteeship on Ganymede. It was a big title, and an even bigger responsibility.

In his hands would be the task of convincing the Ganymedeans that the people of Earth wanted to treat them as brothers; that the Corporation was not representative of all Earth.

HE WOULD have to win the respect and admiration of the Gannys. They remembered him as the man who helped them once; he hoped they would continue to trust him. He had asked for and received the job of teaching the Ganymedeans to forget their first bitter experience with the invaders from Earth.

He would help them in their struggle against their bleak environment. He would do what he could to cement relations between the Gannys and Earth.

Perhaps in a few years it would be possible to establish a permanent colony of Earthmen on Ganymede—later, when the two worlds fully understood each other's motives and ways of thinking. Using Engel's few words, Kennedy would work toward that goal.

He glanced through the spaceship port at the majestic immensity of Jupiter below. Other moons spun round the great planet.

There were other worlds in space; perhaps some day man would meet a

second intelligent race, and a third. The Ganymede experience would guide them in their future encounters.

On Earth, now, they were celebrating the coming of the new year, the birth of 2045 from the dead husk of 2044. It was something of a rebirth for him too, Kennedy thought; out of the Executive Third Level of six months before, out of the mad world of public relations, had come a different man, one who had a real and valuable job to do and who was going to do it.

Earth was just a hazy memory behind him now. Ahead lay Ganymede where work had to be done.

The ship's medic appeared and broke into Kennedy's reverie. "Sir?"

"Eh... oh. What is it, Johnson?"

"We'll be entering deceleration orbit in twelve minutes, sir. Would you care for a gravanol injection this time down?"

Kennedy shook his head. "No, Johnson. Thanks, but I want to see the whole thing."

He strapped himself in, leaned back, and peered out the port at the whiteness of Ganymede growing nearer outside. The ship began to plunge toward its destination. Ted Kennedy smiled calmly to himself and waited for the landing.

And Now The News...

By the time you have this issue in your hands, the February FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION (Issue #35) will be on sale. Yes, FUTURE has returned to its original publication schedule, and we hope you're as pleased about that as we are.

Ed Emsh's cover illustrates "A Bird In the Hand" by David Gordon, which is something of a crime story. One problem in criminal investigation today is what *ought* to be done about suspects against whom there's no evidence warranting arrest. To throw them into jail as "material witnesses" is manifestly unjust, however widespread the practice; to put them under heavy bond, and virtually confine them to their homes is little better. Our hero finds himself caught in a possible future solution of the problem, and he has good reason to clear up the case—if he can figure out just what manner of crime has been committed, and whom the victim is.

The "centennial" business is booming today and "if this goes on" is meat for any science-fictionist. Consider, now, what may be afoot on the centennial of the first moon-flight. Wallace West, a man who knows hucksterism and science, tackles this situation in the feature novelet: "Haunted Centennial". Not a ghost story in the spooky sense—but Trans-Planetary Spaceways, Inc. is most decidedly haunted by the conniving and double-crossing attendant on that great time a century back.

Isaac Asimov, Carol Emshwiller, and Margaret St. Clair are present, too, to make this a banner issue.



The Grakse had been responsible for the rise of these strange creatures on the planet's surface, and didn't want to harm them. But it had to answer a

MATING CALL

by Joseph Farrell

THE GRAKSE was frantic with the mating urge by the time it entered the solar system. It had cruised from star to star while the galaxy made a half turn. The time was only a fraction of its life span, but in this fraction it was no longer guided only by the instinctive urge to seek food. Another instinct was in control; the creature was charged with heat, seeking its like.

It had never seen another like itself. On a barren planet it had grown, but there was no remembrance of when or where it had been born. The only memory was of eating, of burrowing into the rocks toward the heat and radiation that meant its nourishment was nearby.

Growing longer and fatter during an immense time, and then developing strange organs. The changes came so slowly that it didn't remember much what it had been like before they happened.

One day the desire for feeding was gone. Metallic glands, grown to maturity, sent secretions into the massive body. The Grakse didn't know why it was doing it, but it bored up through

the rock and broke out onto the surface of an airless world.

Without sight, but with far ranging senses that had grown in its heavy metal body, the Grakse perceived the sky, a world it had not known of.

But it had been there before. Instinct and racial memory brought the creature fully to the surface, and it knew what to do.

It purred.

The purring grew into a roar as metallic glands created certain transuranic isotopes and threw them together in right proportions. Tubes opened and streams of photons were hurled back. The Grakse rose on its own living jets and left the barren planet forever.

Its long body, built of tissues made of long-lived isotopes, was covered with a skin of highly efficient damping metal. The radiations that originated inside were turned in, deflected to strange organs and turned into propulsive power. The creature accelerated eventually to light speed and cruised through space seeking what its instinct demanded.

It sped past a sun and with spe-

cialized senses probed the planets as it passed, and there was no response. Then another and another...and no response. Sexual tension mounted and the probings grew more and more frantically.

When it approached Sol, it quivered in anticipation. The probing was answered. On the third planet of this sun it would find its mate....

THE GRAKSE who lived in the Earth had been there for many millions of years. It had dim memories of the days when it was a small creature, slithering through faults in the rocks seeking the radioactive deposits, feeding and fattening.

In those early days there were giant creatures on the planet's surface, made of the strange material, protoplasm. The Grakse paused in its feeding, now and then, to learn with its special senses something about the life that teemed on the surface of the planet. At first it seemed incredible that an organism could be composed of such light elements as were to be found on the surface. But the Grakse soon accepted that they were living beings, like itself.

Not really like itself, though; it found that out when it ventured to the surface.

It was a steaming Mesozoic swamp, and the water boiled into live steam as the Grakse came out of the ground. The Grakse slithered to a dry spot and looked around, feeling a kinship with the living things of the surface.

But the living things of the surface felt no kinship. When the enormous clouds of steam began to clear, the creatures of the surface were far away, those who were not dead or dying. In the distance, the Grakse's perception told him that they were lumbering off, terrified and falling clumsily over each other as they hurried from the area.

All over the swamp dead bodies

floated on the water, giant saurians and small ones, fish, insects. The Grakse was puzzled and unhappy. It had come for companionship, but the scene was not the one it had sensed from its ore pocket.

After a while it noticed that the forest was ablaze. This did not bother it or surprise it, for it knew that such things happened now and then.

The forest burned to ashes and the water steamed, but none of the animals came back. The ones who were dead cooked and rotted slowly.

The Grakse waited a long time, hoping some of the creatures would return. Finally its hunger made it slide back into the ground and seek out another ore pocket. It came to the surface a few times again and finally realized the truth.

The surface was not for the Grakse. The heat and radiation of its body was deadly to all the protoplasmic life. After that, it stayed far under the earth, contenting itself with perceiving what went on above by using its special senses. It was sorry for having caused trouble.

THE LIFE above was constantly changing, he noticed. Over the generations, there were some sudden changes in the species, and some slow subtle changes. One forest dwelling species caught his interest. These creatures seemed to be developing a bipedal walk and a peculiar aggressiveness. The Grakse came closer to this tribe to perceive better and then, worried, withdrew quickly.

It had noticed that after it had been near the creatures above, even if not near enough to cause them noticeable harm, they were likely to bear strange offspring. The Grakse waited anxiously, hoping that the species above had not been too badly affected.

When the strange young appeared, the Grakse felt remorse. They were born almost without body hair, naked

helpless creatures without protection against the cold. They were cursed with a curiosity that kept them in trouble. And their spines were malformed, now they were forced to walk on two legs. The Grakse felt sad. It resolved to avoid approaching any of the creatures of the surface from then on. But it was developing a strange desire for companionship.

Somehow the deformed creatures it had brought about managed to live; and some time later, the Grakse realized that they were dominating their surroundings. They used sticks and stones to slay creatures much larger than themselves. Their nakedness was no longer a handicap, for they were wearing the skins of other creatures. The Grakse began to feel a paternal affection for them.

In time, the two legged creatures began to dig into the ground for metals. This was the first time any living creature of the surface had done that. The Grakse felt a thrill of anticipation within its metallic body. Perhaps they would consume the metal and eventually develop into Grakses themselves....

Between feedings, the Grakse had often pondered upon its own origin. What had been its beginning? There was no memory of a beginning, nor was there a sign of an end. Yet every living thing of the surface was born and reproduced itself and died.

The race of men did not consume the metals and become like the Grakse. The Grakse was disappointed, but it continued to feel a kinship with them. Their groups became larger and larger and at last they were in control of most of the outer planet.

The Grakse perceived contentedly that it and the men were the rulers of this planet. The inside, the greater part, belonged to the Grakse. And finally came another surprise—they were seeking out the material on which it fed!

There was plenty of it. The interior of the earth was full of radioactive matter and they were only scratching their little surface. The Grakse felt no sense of trespass. Instead, there was another hope that they would consume the food and grow into beings like itself.

This time the hope was even short-lived. It saw that the men knew of the danger to them and took great precautions in handling the food. Great walls of masonry and heavy metals shielded the small hoards of material they gathered. Sometimes they deliberately brought two pieces of certain materials together and a wild reaction followed. The materials were similar to some of the lighter matter of which the Grakse's flesh was composed.

The Grakse felt a strange stirring when this happened. It learned to follow movements of radioactive material to remote areas of the earth to be near the untamed chain reactions.

When the chain reaction took place, the Grakse quivered with a strange unexplained ecstasy and longing. On a smaller scale, similar things were going on in its own body, controlled and channeled by the Grakse's specialized organs.

Then suddenly the Grakse felt a new emotion. Another of its kind was near. It was approaching fast, and something was going to happen—something strange and wonderful.

THE PRESIDENT of the United States spoke from Geneva at the conclusion of the top level conference. Before other cameras, the highest executives of the other great nations were giving similar messages to their people. "My fellow Americans," said the president, "tonight I am privileged to bring you some really good news. The cold war is over..."

He went on with a rehash of past events. Seven nations now had the hydrogen bomb; the amount of radiation in the Earth's atmosphere was

reaching an alarming level. He didn't go into too much detail about matters as bone tumors, mutations and other unpleasant subjects; those items were tightly classified. The president knew about them. But it was just as well if the public were not alarmed. Panic might result.

So the executives told each other. And every one of them agreed that testing of fusion weapons must stop. Damage had been done, and there would be more, but a long rest for the atmosphere would straighten things out in time.

"...complete and unrestricted inspection," said the president. "Both aerial and surface. Within a few days the United Nations Security Council will set up an official inspection program."

He took off his glasses and polished them unhurriedly. His image bounced off the space station and into television receivers all over North America. A long dramatic pause, while he faced the cameras with a tired but happy smile.

"And as proof of good faith, inspection teams have already started. A large group of American planes, filled with scientists, had already taken off for destinations throughout Russia and China. Foreign planes will soon be arriving in America. There are no restrictions on these people.

"Since the great day when American know-how and the great human resources of our country first smashed the atom, it had been the goal of the American people to dedicate this great power for peace..."

The other executives were saying the same thing, with slight variations as to which great people had first smashed the atom and which great nation had always wanted peace. But all were sincere; none had any reservations about international inspection. They knew what could be the results of further testing...

THE GRAKSE trembled with anticipation and turned toward the third planet. Inside its body, metallic glands began secreting specialized isotopes at an increased rate. Transuranic elements accumulated in its organs, overflowed, and began to circulate through its body. The Grakse strained frantically toward the third planet.

Deceleration was swift, but even the short time spent circling the planet was tormenting. The Grakse sent out an anguished call. Its mate was still on the planet. It should be out here, waiting for it.

The other was still underground, under the southern ice cap of the planet. The Grakse from space sent a frantic call to the one in the earth. Now is the time. Why don't you come?

A confused impression came back to it. There was eagerness like its own, but a strange hesitation. The Grakse in space demanded again. It begged and pleaded.

It could wait no longer. It plunged down toward the ice cap where its mate still hesitated.

THE GRAKSE beneath the Earth felt the call from space. For some time a strange craving had been developing inside it. Now instinct drove it burrowing toward the surface to meet its mate.

Its thoughts were confused. It knew that something must be done. But what? It didn't matter—a built-in knowledge would drive it on and tell it what to do. Strange things were happening in its body and it began to quiver with anticipation of what was to come.

It knew it must leave the planet and that made it think of the men. From long study of them, it knew something about their ways and their motives. It knew that they had agreed to stop exploding hydrogen bombs. And it knew why. That was too bad, for the Grakse had enjoyed the radio-

active bursts. They made it tingle inside with strange desires. . .

The Grakse stopped burrowing upward and started to think. The feeling caused by the nuclear explosions was somehow related to this craving that resulted from the call from space.

Then the Grakse suddenly knew its destiny. It started to climb upward even faster, shaking with eagerness, secreting hormones at an ever increasing rate. Preparing for the meeting. . .

It stopped, thinking of the men who had given up their weapons because the air of their planet could not stand much more radiation. The call from above became demanding. *Why are you waiting?*

The other was barely beyond the atmosphere. That was too close. The Grakse started to call for it to move away. But the other wasn't listening. It was overripe, more than ready. . .

The Grakse struggled miserably with itself, just below the surface, while the ice boiled away just above it. It was wretchedly lonesome for its kind. It clawed its way upward. But the thought of the men held it back. It writhed in indecision.

Then I'm coming after you!

It sensed the other speeding down

through the atmosphere and quivered with tumescence. Its mate was close! But it fought for control. Not here! It mustn't happen here! The men. . .

The other was burrowing into the ground toward it. The Grakse started instinctively in that direction and remembered the men again. The craving of its body was driving it toward its mate. But not here! It made a great mental effort and hurried off as fast as it could in another direction, angling to the surface.

The other turned its course to intersect. The Grakse fought against its instincts and pushed on. . .

ITS SHAPE was no longer just right for digging through rock. There was something different about its body. Suddenly it knew what the change meant and it turned straight up, clawing madly to gain the surface first.

The other was gaining. Once the Grakse felt itself turning back. With another effort of will, it broke through the surface. . .

Now. It wanted to wait here for its mate.

But it forced itself. It purred and strained upward and its jets sent it skyward.

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STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF
AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE
ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946
(Title 39, United States Code, Section 233)
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* Louis H. Silberkleit (Signature of publisher) Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1957.

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THE LOW and the MIGHTY

by Randall Garrett

illustrated by EMSH

Ban Banmyr was a good mechanic, and he liked his work—but having to deal with these stupid, ignorant Earthmen who had taken over Banmyr's world was more than an intelligent being could endure at times...

THE DAY that Ban Banmyr lost his temper and lipped off to an Earthman was not an unusual day, weatherwise. The blue-white sun of Velthyn lit the sky with a whitish glare, against which the thin, drifting clouds were almost invisible. By the Fahrenheit thermometer, which was set in the wall of his watchtower, Ban could see that it was a comfortable 134° outside.

Below his watchtower, like an orderly pile of twisted steel shavings, ran the highways of Earth City, the huge city which the invaders from the sky had built for themselves on Velthyn.

Along the ribbons of steel sped the small, fast land vehicles of the Earthmen. Ban watched them skimming around the broad sweeps of the curves

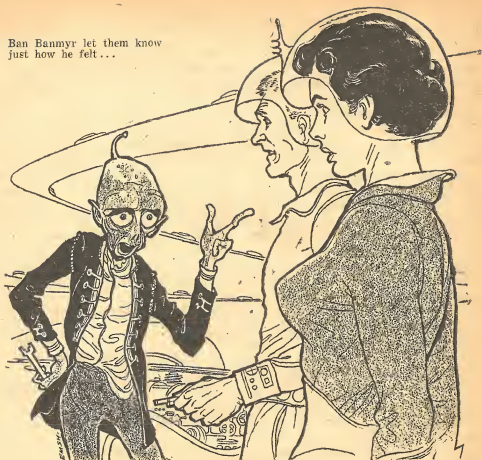
and wondered to himself: *How many today?*

It was the wrong thought to think. On his panel, a light flashed, winking brightly in the comparative dimness of the watchtower. Ban snarled a soft oath in Old Upper High Velth and looked rapidly over the highway in his sector. It didn't take him long to spot the vehicle. One of the Earthmen's cars was pulled off to one side, in Emergency Repair Port Seven.

"Think of evil," he quoted aloud, "and evil will come."

He grabbed his bag of tools in one three-fingered hand and headed for the elevator. He punched the *down* button for Level Three and stood, frowning at the shining metal walls of the car as it dropped him to the highway.

Ban Banmyr let them know
just how he felt...



It wasn't that Ban Banmyr didn't like his job—at least he didn't dislike the work itself. He found a satisfying fascination in the complex mechanics of the Earth-built machinery under the hoods of the small runabouts. No, there was nothing wrong with being an Emergency Repairman; it was a good job—if only he didn't have to deal with Earthmen!

Why had they come here, anyway? Why had they come drifting down in their great, shining ships to colonize a planet that was obviously unsuited to them?

"Unsuited", Ban decided, was an understatement of the first order. The climatic conditions of Velthyn were downright inimical to the pale, chunky, beady-eyed beings from space.

THE GREEN nickel-copper complex in Ban's blood could utilize the hard ultra-violet that poured down from the sky; Ban's blood could actually convert the radiation into useful energy. In addition, his great-balled eyes, with their tiny lens openings, were perfectly suited to focusing the softer U-V on the retina; and the great bony ridges over them kept them shadowed from the direct rays of the overhead sun.

But the Earthmen were forced to wear protective helmets that shielded them from the sun, and filtered through only the rays that were visible to their eyes. Their cars were domed, sealed, and air-conditioned to protect them from heat that was normally well above their own body temperature. Ob-

viously, Velthyn was no place for any sane Earthman.

And yet, by the Triple Moons, they had come and built a city! Why? The only answer Ban had ever figured out in all the years he had pondered it was that the Earthmen had a circuit loose somewhere in their brains.

The elevator stopped, and Ban stepped out. He walked over to the slideway marked: *For Personnel Only*, and headed for ERP-7.

Inside the car, waiting patiently, were two Earthmen.

Or... No. As he came closer, Ban could see that it was an Earthman and an Earthgirl. It was difficult to tell the sexes apart. Evidently, the Earth people themselves had trouble in distinguishing each other, for they had adopted an arbitrary hair code. The males cut their hair short, while the females permitted theirs to grow much longer. It had taken Ban a long time to understand even that much, since he, himself, had no hair at all.

Still, all things considered, Ban had to admit that there were definite similarities between his own race and that of the Earthmen. Besides the fact that both races had two arms and two legs, their facial muscles worked similarly. It was easy enough to read the expressions of an Earthman after a person became used to it. A smile was still a smile, a frown was still a frown.

The Earthman and Earthgirl were smiling as he came up.

Smiling they might be, but Ban Banmyr knew how to act around Earthmen. He touched his forehead and said: "What seems to be the trouble, Sir and Lady?"

The Earthman shrugged and spread his hands. "Who knows? It just quit on us. We managed to coast in here on our momentum; if the Emergency Repair Port had been any further down the highway, we'd have been stuck right in the traffic lane."

Ban smiled, but he had to force his face into it. "I shall check, then, Sir and Lady."

Earthmen were such blockheads! None of them seemed to know anything about their own machinery!

The girl smiled and blinked her eyes. "Do hurry, will you? We have an urgent appointment."

The blinking of an Earthman's eyes—or, rather, in this case, an Earthgirl's eyes—was always somewhat disconcerting to Ban Banmyr. The alien's eyes always looked upside down, because the bigger of the two lids was on top and slid down over the eyeball—instead of being at the bottom and sliding up, as any normal being's should do.

"I will do my best, Lady," Ban said, with studied obsequiousness.

HE CARRIED his case of tools back to the rear of the car and flipped open the engine cover with a practiced hand.

The power unit was a standard Eberhardt Magnetogravitic Supercharge Hypermotor, Model II. Ban Banmyr knew those motors backwards, forwards, and inside-out.

Now—what was wrong with the thing?

It didn't take him long to find out. The whole electron injection system had been blown out by an overload. There was only one way to overload—an Eberhardt—hit the accelerator pedal without putting the dissipator in neutral. And that took an incredible amount of stupidity, even for an Earthman.

Assuming his most pleasant smile, Ban went back to the canopy, touched his forehead again, and said; "I'm sorry, Sir and Lady, but I'll have to shut off the whole power section. The air conditioning..." He let his voice trail off apologetically.

The man looked at his companion.

"Turn your suit on, sweet; It's hotter than blazes out there. We might as well get out and stretch our legs if the air conditioner is shut off."

She nodded. "How long will it take?" she asked Ban.

Ban thought about it for a few seconds, converting the Velthynina time units into those of the Earthmen. "At least two hours, Lady."

She glanced at the man. "We'll never make it, then; you'd better call in for us."

The man made a phone call on his car's communicator, then the two of them climbed out of the vehicle. They wore air-conditioned suits, with the transparent helmets that partially covered their heads, leaving their faces bare, protected only by the curtain of chilling air that swept down from the forepiece of the helmets themselves. Although transparent to ordinary light, the helmets reflected ultraviolet, which made them look mirrorlike to Ban's eyes.

Ban shivered a little at the blast of cold air that was released from the vehicle's interior when the canopy opened. He stood back, well away from the Earthpeople, to avoid the chill that came from them.

The Earthman reached inside and shut off the entire power system. Then, turning toward Ban, he said: "All set now, my man; you may go to work."

Ban bowed wordlessly and went around to the rear of the car again.

All right, my man; you may go to work. My man!

It was remarks like that which made Ban's blood boil.

BAN BANMYR'S race, the Velthyna, was an old race and a wise one. Their recorded history had begun in the dim past, twelve thousand years before. The philosophies of the Ancients were studied by every school-

child on Velthyn; the names and deeds of the Great Lords could be recited, at least in brief, by any adult; quotations from the ancient scholars were on every man's tongue, spicing his conversation with the *bon mots* of the ages.

Velthyn's philosophers had long ago reasoned that the planet must be round; that it revolved on its axis, and that the center of the system was the blue-white sun. When the Earthmen had come, none of their information had surprised anyone; and the intruders' place of origin—another planet of another sun—was accepted as a logical extrapolation of what was already known.

True, the Earthmen had a flair for gadgetry; but beyond that they were no wiser than the Velthyna. Indeed, in many ways, they were sadly lacking in knowledge. They couldn't be expected to know the details of Velthynina history, of course, but they didn't seem to know much more than the broad outlines of their own history—a history which only went back some seven thousand years. It seemed that only certain of their scholars were interested in such things; the others didn't care.

What right had such a group of untaught children to claim superiority over the Velthyna of Velthyn?

Ban twisted savagely on one of the nuts that held down the microfilter unit, and the nut shattered in the wrench. The washover of radiation had crystallized the metal.

He had been bending over the motor; now he straightened abruptly, angry at the shattered bit of metal stuck in his wrench. He felt a sudden chill of icy air wash down his back. He gasped and spun around.

The Earthman had been standing directly behind him, watching the repair job with interest. When Ban Banmyr spun, the Earthman stepped back a bit.

"Trouble?" he asked blandly.

"That's a pretty complicated bit of machinery, isn't it? I guess it must have taken you a long time to learn how to repair it."

Ban suppressed a shudder. "Yes, Sir, it did," he said, forcing a smile.

"What's the trouble?" the girl asked. "Why did that nut break?" Her voice and eyes were filled with naive interest.

"The metal has become recrystallized, Lady," Ban explained. "It's become brittle and lost its tensile strength."

"Oh," said the girl. "I see."

Ban was quite sure that she didn't see anything of the kind.

"I'll have to get a replacement part, Sir and Lady," he said. "I'll be back as soon as possible."

He took the slideway back to the base of the watchtower and then the elevator.

He asked himself the question again: *What right had the Earthmen to claim superiority over the Velthyna?*

And the answer came at once: *Power!*

They had power such as no Great Lord of Velthyn had ever had, nor ever thought existed. It was a power of a different kind, but more potent for all of that.

THE GREAT LORDS ruled by the power of the Great God; to disobey a Great Lord was to disobey the Great God—at least in theory. Actually, the Great Lords ruled because they had always ruled; accepting their rule had become a racial habit. Velthyn had been stabilized into eighty-four principalities long millennia ago, each ruled by its Great Lord. There had been, and always would be, fights and squabbles over territory; but these were minor. Such squabbles never affected the peasant much, except when his lands were despoiled because they had become the scene of one of the battles

between two mercenary armies of the Great Lords.

A Great Lord could order a man killed, and he was killed. A Great Lord's word was law, because if his word were disobeyed the offender would be punished. And the offender was punished because the Great Lord's word was law. It was as simple as that.

But since he had come to work in Earth City, Ban Banmyr had begun to realize that the Earthmen had a better answer.

If one disobeyed a Great Lord, the Great Lord ordered his soldiers to kill the disobedient one. But if one offended an Earthman, no orders were given. The Earthman simply drew the little weapon at his belt and pulled the trigger; that was all.

Again Ban shuddered—and this time it was not from a blast of cold air.

When he stepped into the watchroom at the top of the tower, Ban automatically glanced at the warning board. How many other disabled cars would there be?

Surprisingly, there were none. Ban was grateful for that; he had become known lately as a man whose luck was bad, because of the numbers of breakdowns in his sector. The other ER men had been chiding him about it for the last Period.

He walked into the Replacement Stockroom and picked out a new microfilter unit, complete with new nuts and bolts. Then he returned to the elevator and headed down again, the unit cradled lovingly under his arm.

Except for the ever-present threat of instant death, Ban Banmyr really liked his job. Like many others of his race, Ban had come to one magnificent Earth City because of the lure of money—which, in its own way, represented power. If a wealthy man played his cards right, he was in no danger from a Great Lord.

The Earthmen had built their vast metropolis right in the middle of the Nahtufar Desert. It was useless, unwanted land, so none of the Great Lords had objected; and now, with the City already built, it was too late for them to object. If all the Great Lords had banded together, the combined might of their mercenaries would still mean nothing to the Earthmen.

Individuals could get in, though. The Earthmen needed workers, since they were too haughty—and too ignorant—to do work themselves. They needed men like Ban Banmyr, men who were smart enough to learn Earth's technology and greedy enough to put up with abuse from the aliens for the sake of a relatively astronomical paycheck.

But to work for the Earthmen was ignominious in the extreme; at least a Great Lord had wisdom and a deep knowledge of important things, while the Earthmen were stupid in the extreme.

WHEN HE returned to the car, Ban Banmyr saw that the Earthman and the girl were bending over the open motor housing. He closed his eyes for a moment, sending up a prayer to the Great God that they hadn't poked around inside and wrecked something; the motor was in bad enough shape as it was.

They hadn't touched it as far as Ban could see; they'd just been looking. They stepped back as Ben approached. Then, without warning, the girl pointed a finger.

"What does that little gadget do?"

"Lady!" Almost automatically, Ban's own hand reached out, grabbed the Earthgirl's arm, and jerked her hand away from the meson condenser.

Then he realized what he had done.

Without looking to see whether the man's hand was near the pistol grip at his belt, Ban bowed very low. There was a cold perspiration on his brow. "I

beg mercy, Lady and Sir. But if I had allowed the Lady to touch the terminals, she would have died instantly."

There was a momentary silence; then the Earthman said: "You have our pardon and our thanks. Proceed with your work."

Ban thanked them properly and went back to work.

THE NEXT two hours were absolute misery for Ban Banmyr. As it approached noon, the sun blazed down with ever-increasing warmth, and Ban, bent over the complex workings of the autocar had to mop his brow frequently with his handkerchief to keep from dripping perspiration into the mechanism.

But the heat was only a minor disturbance. The two Earthpeople were constantly underfoot—if that term can be applied to beings who were taller and heavier than Ban Banmyr. He would reach for a tool and find that one or the other had somehow managed to interpose themselves between Ban and the tool kit. Just about every other time he turned around, he bumped into one or the other of them.

Between the external heat of the sun and the internal heat of anger, Ban Banmyr of Velthyn had just about reached the boiling point. Or, rather, he had passed it and was holding the explosion in by pressure of sheer willpower.

Mentally, he was cursing the complexity of the hypermotor itself. If the damned thing weren't so complicated, he could have fixed it long before now and gotten back to his watchtower, away from these meddling aliens.

He had long ago realized that the mechanism of the Model II was a lot more complicated than it had to be. There were three components that could be replaced by one; and several of the wiring circuits were superflu-

ous, if they were properly worked around.

By the time the second hour had rolled around, Ban was so furious and so miserable that he was ready to try anything to get this job over with, get rid of the two Earthpeople, and go back to the relative peace and quiet of his watchtower. He had had to put up with Earthmen before, but none like this!

He had badly underestimated the amount of time it would take to complete the repairs; there were two other parts ruined which he hadn't noticed, and he'd had to go back to the tower to get both of them. Add to that the fact that the Earthpeople themselves, being always in the way, had added a minute here and a minute there in delay.

The chewing gum incident was the one which made Ban Banmyr finally explode.

He had finally decided to work around the bad places—redesign the motor on the spot and get the job over with. It took him fifteen minutes more to get the machine in working condition after that—in place of the hour-and-a-half working time that would have been required to finish if he'd repaired the motor the way it was originally designed.

Then he stood up, mopping his bony supraorbital ridges with an already-soaking kerchief.

"Are you through?" asked the Earthman.

Ban nodded, not trusting himself to speak aloud.

The Earthgirl said: "Wonderful!" She turned to the man. "He took much longer than he said he would, but that isn't his fault. Give him something, George."

The Earthman nodded and reached into a pocket of his air-conditioned suit. His hand came out with a pack-

age of that Earth concoction known as chewing gum.

"Have a stick, Repairman," said the Earthman.

BAN STARED at him for a long moment. The gum was chewed by the Earthmen and then spat out after all the carbohydrates had been extracted—Ban Banmyr knew that. But one of the things that the Earthpeople didn't seem to understand was that there were physiological differences between Earthmen and the Velthyna.

In the first place, because of their higher body temperature, the Velthyna's mouths melted the gum into a sticky mess. In the second place, it tasted terrible to the Velthyna. Ban usually accepted gum when it was given to him, but only to swallow it rapidly. There was a certain amount of usable nourishment in the stuff, but no pleasure.

To Ban, the offer was the final insult. "I don't want any gum," he said steadily.

"Oh, don't be shy," said the girl, smiling. "Go on. Take it."

Ban was never quite sure what he said during the next minute or so, but it went something like this: "I don't want any of that foul stuff! I don't want your thanks! I don't want anything from you stupid barbarians! I..."

"Why are you angry?" asked the girl calmly.

He told her. He told her how she had gotten in his way; how he hated her superciliousness; how stupid the Earthmen were to have designed a machine so complicated; how he had redesigned it, how he...

And then, quite suddenly, he realized what he had said. Without even stopping to think about it, he spun on his heel and began running. Just as he turned, he saw the Earthman's

hand flash toward the holster at his belt.

Ban Banmyr took a flying leap and landed on the slideway, flat on his belly. He rolled over and caught one flashing glimpse of the Earthman speaking into the microphone at his wrist. Ban knew that he was getting replies from someone else through the earpieces on his helmet.

The rolling spin, plus the velocity of the slidewalk had carried him near the edge of the roadway. Fifty feet below was the next level, the south-bound level.

Something hummed near his ear. He recognized the sound as that of the beam which came from an Earthman's pistol.

He grabbed the edge of the roadway and swung himself over. Below him was fifty feet of empty space—more than that if he missed the roadway below. Instead of dropping, he swung himself under the girders that supported the road, a webwork of super-strong metal that braced the roadway above.

For a second or two, he was frantic. Where could he go? What could he do next? He had to get out of the city, cross the desert, and get back to his own people. And then?

THEN HE heard voices from above. Evidently the Earthman and the Earthgirl were looking over the edge.

"George! He dropped! He let go! He killed himself!"

"I don't see him," said the Earthman.

The Earthgirl's voice was tense. "If he missed the next level down, he dropped over a thousand feet. We couldn't see him down there in the glare of this sun!"

"Damn!" said the Earthman. "Damn! I should have shot first and asked Central later!"

The girl said something else, but

Ban didn't catch it. The pair were evidently walking away from the edge of the upper roadway.

They thought he was dead!

They wouldn't think so very long, of course. As soon as they got a report from those below, they'd know what he had done. He had to move fast.

He began crawling along the girder, keeping his eyes on it rather than on the traffic-filled roadway fifty feet beneath.

At last he came to a vertical brace. There weren't very many of them; the Earthmen's engineering methods eliminated all but the most necessary of bracing.

Ban Banmyr looked down. There was no sign of anyone watching for him. Directly below was one of the Emergency Repair Ports. Number Forty-Six. And there was a disabled car in it!

The Velthyna who was working on it was named Dorst something-or-other; Ban knew him only slightly. The Earthman who owned the vehicle was nowhere in sight. Good!

Ban considered. It was difficult in the extreme to tell one Earthman from another; evidence showed that the Earthmen had just as much trouble in telling one Velthyna from another. And, in the uniform of the Emergency Repair Service, all the Repairmen looked alike, anyway. It was worth the chance.

Carefully, he worked his way down the cross-braces on the vertical strut, being careful to keep the steel vertical between himself and Dorst whatever-his-name-was.

His plan was simple. He'd walk over to Dorst in a friendly fashion and ask his advice about some delicate operation on a motor. Then, when Dorst wasn't looking, Ban would crown him with a wrench and hide the unconscious man somewhere in the watch-

tower. After that, he'd simply take Dorst's place for a few hours while the hunt for Ban Banmyr himself cooled down. Then he'd head for the Outer Gate and the desert.

When he had climbed down to the pavement below, Ban straightened his uniform and sauntered casually towards the repair port as though he'd come down by elevator and slidewalk.

It looked almost too easy.

It was.

As he approached the car, an Earthman rose suddenly from where he had been hidden within the vehicle, and with one smooth motion, he drew his his weapon and fired the beam straight into Ban's face.

THE GREAT LORD of Gwonath, Subdistrict of Velthyn, looked out of his palace window at the smoothly-running automatic factory in the distance.

Twenty years! he thought. *Twenty years.*

Had it really been that long? In some ways, it seemed only a few weeks since he had become a Great Lord; in other ways, it seemed centuries.

There was a chime at his elbow. Without turning, he said: "Come in."

An aide stepped in and the Great Lord turned from the window.

"Yes?"

"Your Greatness," said the aide, "the Noble K'torn Peshā, the Ambassador from Vega, is here."

The Great Lord nodded. "Send the Ambassador in."

The Vegan Ambassador was a short, barrel-shaped humanoid with blue-black skin and small, jet-black eyes. He bowed ceremonially to the Great Lord. "I am happy," he said, "that Your Greatness has seen fit to receive me."

"The pleasure is mine, Ambassa-

dor," the Great Lord replied. "Sit down, Noble K'torn; we no longer stand on ceremony here."

The Vegan nodded and sat. "I'm glad to hear that. We are—ah—somewhat abrupt and blunt in our ways, we Vegans. Other races are more flowery, but we prefer bluntness if possible."

The Great Lord smiled reminiscently. "Twenty years ago, it wouldn't have been possible for you to be blunt to a Great Lord. But things have changed since the coming of the Earthmen."

The Ambassador nodded. "We have found it so on Vega III," he agreed. "We resist change, but the Earthmen know how to handle such situations. They have methods of picking key men and putting them in positions of power."

The Great Lord seated himself behind his desk and picked up a paperweight. It was a chromed Bryson wrench. "Yes, they have their methods. Twenty years ago, I, Ban Banmyr, was a common mechanic, working for them. I didn't realize at the time that their whole city was nothing but a training and testing ground. I didn't know that I was working on antiquated machines that hadn't been used on Earth for centuries; to me, they were quite up-to-date. In fact, they were far beyond our crude technology as it was twenty years ago."

The Vegan raised a double-thumbed hand. "I know; if it is anything like the trick they pulled on us, I'll wager that they wanted you to figure out your own improvements."

Great Lord Ban Banmyr nodded. "That was it, exactly. Of course, when I was—ah—apprehended in the act, I became frightened and ran, but they soon traced me down because of the uniform I wore—it had a tracer built into it.

"They had to beam me down with a stun gun before they could make me

sit still long enough to listen to what they had to say."

The Vegan Ambassador chuckled in a deep baritone. "It sounds as though your troubles were similar to ours; a stagnation caused by too much interest in our own past glories and a high opinion of our own wisdom because we confused knowledge with wisdom."

The Great Lord nodded slowly. "There is a definite similarity. I suppose that's why the Earthmen suggest-

ed that our planets should work together."

"I dare say that's it," said the Ambassador. "Clever and wonderful people, these Earthmen." Then he picked up the attache case at his side. "But enough of this, Your Greatness. As you are now the elected ruler of Velthyn, it is to you that I must present our proposals. Let's get down to business."

"Let's," said Ban Banmyr, the Great Lord of all Velthyn.

Looking Ahead

This magazine went on sale December 1st. Right after the bells stop ringing out the New Year, we hope you'll notice Frank Kelly Freas' fine cover for the March issue of *SCIENCE FICTION STORIES*, which is due to be on sale. Freas illustrates Randall Garrett's "Far From Somewhere", which considers some of the traps that archaeologists and anthropologists, investigating other-world civilizations, are likely to tumble into. The traps are not dens of grisly monsters, pens for the victims to bizarre gods, but methods of operation—methods which conceal their own error.

Dr. Asimov is with us, with a good-size article, this time, entitled "The Littlest". For all their lip-service to "facts", scientists have often taken assumption and theory strictly on faith—and for a very good reason. Given a choice between faith in the not only as-yet unproven but also the as-yet undiscovered, and chaos, scientists chose faith. For to refuse to accept and hope, fundamental laws would have had to be discarded. It all began in the last century with the discovery of radio-activity...

Reputable men have perpetrated hoaxes, at times, or have been unwittingly involved in them; but Donald Franson tells about a professor (far from mad) who deliberately concocted the most outrageous of frauds in his novelet, "The Time For Delusion". Generally speaking, my own agreement or disagreement with an author's ideas (as expressed in a story, rather than his own personal opinions) has no bearing on anything whatsoever, but I can partly answer people who have asked me my opinion of flying saucers, etc., by referring them to this story.

Meanwhile, our best wishes for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all, and do join us in the March issue of *SCIENCE FICTION STORIES* you won't be sorry!



KANGAROO COURT

by Walter
Maneikis

The charges against Private Carroll were peculiar, to say the least: volunteering too much...failing to spit in the Corporal's eye...and similar offenses.

FIRST SERGEANT Ranke, a thick-necked man in his middle forties, rapped the gavel against the formulan table. "The court will come to order. The accused will stand."

Larry Carroll rose. A short fellow, he seemed to have no down on his chin and only a foggy notion what to do. "Yes, sir."

"Don't, 'sir' me; I'm not an officer."

Ranke's idea was to test a space soldier, but how far his animus toward this squirt of a pipsqueak motivated him, and how strongly he felt the urge to punish a junior he couldn't tell himself. This raw recruit had saluted right and picked up all the cigaret butts on the company street, but he was wrong anyway. The rookie was wrong because he did too much right. A real pro had to growl once in a while and pick a fight. Nobody who was unruffled when the cinder storms put scars into his cheeks could be normal.

"No, sergeant."

"You mean 'yes'."

"No. I mean 'yes'."

"You may sit down." Ranke was disgusted. He lifted up the charge sheet, prepared by the clerk that afternoon. "Lawrence Carroll, Private. Army Serial Number 218, 232, 264. Assigned to Galactic Survey Company 23. Age 22. No allowance for dependents. Length of service 18 months, 23 days—six months in basic infantry, 12 months in Survey Schools at Lexington, Virginia, and 23 days on a so-called asteroid."

"I object to everything," Biceps Olson shouted. An outspace corporal, with more pay than a Stateside major, he laughed hoarsely.

"You object to what?"

"To letting this little bum off." Olson chortled.

"We shall proceed with the charge and the specifications. The list of witnesses will come later." Ranke sighed. The accused had no spirit at all.

"The alleged soldier has volunteered too much." A technical sergeant, Forbes, squashed out a cigaret on the

formulan floor of the bunkhouse. "He ain't got a brain in his head."

"Quiet, please." Ranke grinned behind his beard and felt contempt for hairless Larry. Everybody else wore a spade or a beaver or a French dip. The personnel was stagnant in mind. They had to take their fun in growing whiskers and admiring pinups most of the time. The Wasps were only a vague threat. Everybody needed a jolt. The court might do it and release everybody's suppressions. "According to the 195th Article of War, the said soldier, unquote, committed the following offenses:

He did not, on July 1, the day of his arrival, spit in Cpl. Olson's left eye.

He, on July 12, did not disrobe before Pvt. Pickens' pinup of Toots La Shore, the nightingale of Galactic Surveys.

He, on July 23, did not fabricate a witch's image of Sgt. Ranke, with pins stuck through the stripes. Gentlemen, the said soldier is guilty of the charge and the three specifications."

"May I protest?" Larry arose.

"You are incompetent, irrelevant, and immaterial." Ranke pounded the gavel.

"I was just trying to understand the magic of 23 here." The accused sat down.

"That's simple, pipsqueak," Ranke said. "The question is not in order, but it is the duty of the court to be fair and impartial. The magic is that you are on 23rd year, have served, unquote, 23 days on this elegant piece of slag and cinder, and that if you last 23 months you'll be ready for the psychopathic ward in the Moon Locker."

"He's guilty as hell." Private Ulysses Pickens, the next in line to be corporal if anybody died, chewed his tobacco. After a week of use the quid had no power left.

"The court now pronounces Pvt.

Larry Carroll, ASN umpty-ump, guilty of the charge and the specifications." Ranke glared.

LARRY KNEW this was another survival test but decided to have some fun. "May it please the court. Can't I plead guilty to 'not guilty'?" He remembered an ancient saw used by tricky lawyers in divorce trials. "Did you stop beating your wife? Answer yes or no." The 195th was the garbage can article. It covered everything from writing complaints to a Congressman to using cigar coupons to trade with natives. On Outstation 23, no semblance of organic life had appeared.

"Guard, silence this man." Ranke kept a stern face.

One of the enlisted men near the center of the bunkhouse stepped up to gesture. Larry ignored him. "Don't I get a trial?"

"Well," Ranke growled. "It's irregular. Might set a bad precedent. You've been found guilty twice."

Cpl. Olson, fond of throwing blocks of cinder or slag in the low gravity like a shotputter on Earth, was the strong man. "Let's convict him three times. I'll be the TJA."

"The trial judge advocate is appointed." Ranke rapped with the gavel again. "Pvt. Pickens?"

Goldtooth, a boy from Georgia, raised his hand. "Ah believes in the rights of all democratic citizens. I volunteer for the defense—Ah mean ah."

"So appointed." Ranke looked sour. "The folly will start."

"Don't I have the choice of my own lawyer?" Larry looked dim and uncertain. "I've read..."

"Objection overruled."

On the immediate scene, the underground bunkhouse held the enlisted station complement. Facing Ranke, they moved their cots into semicircle around him and listened to the fractures of logic. They all floated about 300,000 miles from Pluto. Outstation

23, largely an enclosed dome protecting a wing of space scouts and a refueling station, was their home. From there scooters periodically departed to inspect the planet and flash back word about the Wasps, rumored creatures of the Outer Depths, who might want to invade Earth.

In the popular mind these unknown entities flew rocket funnels and distorted disks, looking for tender spots. Earth folklore, reinforced by billions of dollars yearly, had it that the Wasps were angels of death created by Mephisto to punish—not sloth or pride or vanity—but ignorance. Since ignorance was vast, it was the more formidable, excused and magnified by TV shows that exhibited a valiant hero who rescued the fair heroine in her tizzy and found a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow on Deneb. With the cash a happy ending was inevitable, but not for the Survey Companies.

"What happens if I'm guilty?" The recruit knew the answer. "Two hours' oxygen on a three-hour orbit over 23? Then you rescue me with five minutes to go."

"Now how did you hear such tripe?" Ranke laughed. "I recommend that the court give the accused a month of company punishment after the primary sentence. You can dig a hole a day and fill it up."

"Who is the court?" Larry asked in innocence.

"I am." A crooked smile touched Ranke's face. "For you the court will cut the margin to fifty-five seconds."

Olson lifted up his arm and came out with an extension of the charge and the specifications. He gestured while Larry drew an instrument like a compass out of his tunic and put it on the floor at his feet.

"You like reversals, kangaroo court style," he murmured wearily. "Let's see what happens." The two little needles revolved in opposite directions at fantastic speed. "The accused is guilty on

any plea. Let's see the character of the accusers." He twirled the gadget toward Pvt. Ulysses Pickens.

THE AMBITIOUS spokesman for himself regretted his gold tooth. Somebody had knocked it out with a club—that crud of a railroad dick.

"I always wanted to be a first sergeant. Boy, them guys have it made. Who kin make it? I kin! Ah'm just a Georgia Cracker boy with six brothers and sisters, but ah knows this here space service. Then you get up in grade, an' all you gotta do is sit tight and let everybody else talk. Then you pick the best of the talk and make a decision. Ah'm gonna be a first sergeant if it kills me."

Pickens' mind veered to his desire to justify his existence. The Army was the place for the poor boys. Hell, the chow was better than at home. He forgot the name of his youngest sister, the one who'd died from pellagra.

"Ah could be almost satisfied without a woman." He thought of his furloughs in Canalport on Mars and Uranium City on Venus. "Not too bad, but them gals tried to pick mah pockets. Ah knocked one of 'em off'n a bar stool."

A year earlier, Earth time, he'd had a chance to be transferred to a Hospital Train. A milk run. "All them trains do is take the wounded to a base hospital. They got it made." On each train there were four medical officers and six nurses. The two highest-ranking non-coms had a chance. "Maybe ah might find a Southern gal among 'em. As first sergeant I could take my pick of two little chickens. With space pay. I didn't join. Ah'd been washin' bedpans. Not enough stripes."

The shadow of gloom hit his cortices. His fierce desire to prove himself came from a record of petty crime. He had enlisted under a false name. It was a good thing the county courthouse had burned with his birth record. Intelligence couldn't prove a thing, even that

he had been born. "Paw couldn't support the kids." As a boy he had stolen cars and rolled drunks in Athens and Rome, Georgia. That was all over. The Army information and Education Bureau had educated him to believe that any man—what did they call it? had a large potential. The idea was a bit fuzzy. Anyway, it was a good thing the fire destroyed his early official history.

"There's six nurses. Maybe if I make a good show in this here court martial an' somebody gets killed, I'll get two stripes. It's a start. I saw one of them nurses. Boy!

"This is a crud's-a-fire cinder. Why wasn't ah assigned to 17? I swear ah ain't gonna crack, but this here place dries the guts outten a man."

"Goldtooth's a nasty name. I flipped a boxcar, an' some railroad dick clobbered me. Some day maybe ah'll ketch up with 'im. People laugh at the gold tooth. It sticks right out like the rear end of a hound dawg." His mind trailed off into incoherencies, including the wish he could be consistent in the use of either *I* or *ah*. Army service had changed his accent, even some of his ideas.

LARRY POINTED the instrument at Cpl. Everett Olson, a squat man with a cauliflower ear. Once he had held the All-Army Tight-heavyweight free style wrestling championship.

"What the hell am I doing up here?" Now nearly bald, he was afraid of his childhood memories. "Goldilocks. A sissy," he whispered with a shudder. Olson's parents had told him never to fight. He saw other children in grade school pluck and push at one another, but the first time his father saw him hit a boy, young Everett had received the beating of his life.

After the first six grades he'd taken up weightlifting. His mother still made him wear his hair long until one of his schoolmates yelled, "A fairy! Hah!" He'd knocked the brat down and quit

Junior Polytech. "I'm gonna drive a truck and buy a convertible." He'd had a girl. "What was her name?" He worked at odd jobs for a year and bought a bicycle. When she married a butcher, he enlisted in the Luna Quartermasters. Plenty of time up there for weight juggling and wrestling.

"I'm the strongest man around here. I can crack anybody wide open, even Ranke.

"Bernice promised to wait for me. She didn't. That's why I re-enlisted." He tried to remember whether she had been the fourth or fifth girl who'd found somebody else. "I'm fed up now. This is a putrid Army. Lord, don't let me foul up; maybe Grace'll stick with me. She's true blue. Maybe she's a bitch like the rest of 'em. Maybe not. I gave her a diamond ring, but I don't write. I don't know how to say things.

"Who was that dope who called me names in Venus City? I got fined two hundred occupation credits for knocking him flat. The jerk led with a roundhouse right. What a goof!"

In the stream of consciousness Larry had tapped, Olson showed his fear of doing something wrong, maybe spending the rest of his days in the Moon Locker, drilling till exhaustion in the penal colony and waiting for death. He'd heard that five years was the maximum survival period. He shaved his head once a week so not even one leftover hair would show.

"Aw, the hell with it. I'll work my squad till it falls apart. Those poor, misbegotten goons. What made 'em volunteer to come out here on a floating cinder? What made me? I've looked for the Wasps on every telescope and radar on the station. In my two years on this fouled up stinkball I've done my duty. Maybe I might enlist again if they give me another stripe. None of my boys is gonna take the trip to jail. I won't let 'em make a mistake. They don't belong with the crooked politicians who've been found out. Don't make a mistake.

"My squad's a nice bunch. Specially selected. I don't know. We gotta have discipline or the Wasps'll get us.

"My Pittsburg gal might stick with me. Grace is worth three of anybody. I wish I'd saved the money I threw over the bars in the slimy joints from hell to breakfast. This kid, this Larry, isn't so bad, but I got to give him the needle. He served in some NCO school. Must've flunked. Why is this young punk on this lousy cinder?"

"I don't know what's next. Maybe my girl will marry me if I ditch the service. This is the last for me. I've had it. What? Loyalty oaths—extra special ones for outspace personnel. Iron rations. Stale air. On a wide band of cinder. Just a damned cinder without a single plant. I used to love flowers, and now I'm here. How low can a guy get?"

Olson looked spitefully at Pickens. "Who's this Georgia boy? If he kept any money, I'd wrestle him for it. He gets a bundle on payday but sends most of it back home. He's a second dealer in poker and likes his own deck against these kids. A complete louse. Every time I wake up I wonder if my girl would go for him. Women like the lean type. She might be running around with some sawefay government clerk. I wonder what makes Ranke tick."

TIRED OF the paranoia, Larry slid his left foot a few inches to aim the instrument toward the first sergeant. The little needles revolved, halted to summarize, and dashed on toward the next perception.

The head of the enlisted men began to record his own character. "Pickens is a hog-and-hominy boy. Olson is mama's chattel. His mother kept him in curlers too long. What a life—but no worse than suffering through poverty and misery as Pickens did." Ranke, as an old hat in the service, prided himself on knowing everything of importance about everybody above and below him. He had a mental dossier on every man of the station com-

plement. "This Cracker boy found a home in the Army. Olson does his job, but he's a mixed cookie. All right. If enough people die, I'll promote them both. The captain trusts my judgment. He should. I've been around more corners of the solar system.

"That wooden head. The other day he said I had the intelligence to go to Officers' Candidate School. Why didn't I? I'll match my Classification Score against his any time. The trouble is he won't look at the personnel records. If he did, this punk Larry wouldn't be here on this post.

"Of course, I have to admire Pickens and Olson. They volunteered. To an old pro like me that means something. I hate the jackasses who get free education from the government and then cry because the big brass pulls them in for a short hitch on some improbable mote of dust. Lt. Johns had a free medical education and crabbed about spending two years here to pay back the government. I'm glad he's gone. Always accusing me of leniency. He had a head like a block of mush.

"I'm almost forty-seven. This Johns complained that he was too old to be pulled in. Too old at thirty. A laugh with no chuckle."

The old professional, Ranke, who had sacrificed friends and family for the service, yawned in recollection. He wasn't indifferent. He wished the relief ship would come for the men who'd spent two years on this heap of slag. Something had to happen, or the amateurs would bust a gut.

He especially disliked the amateur reserve officers invested by some oblique act of Congress. Most of them had no knowledge of military law or administration—rocket specialists head shrinkers, or computers. When their spleen was up, they charged soldiers twice their experience before a general court. In the outstations the lowest sentence was four years on the Moon. On the drifting hunks of rock and slag the wartime regulations obtained. On

Earth an enlisted man might strike an officer and get off with three years in Leavenworth. On a space fragment away from home he might get life or death—life in a mine or death by hanging. The Army hadn't abandoned its primitive methods since MacArthur's day.

"I love my kids, but this Larry is too eager. I need an integrated outfit that won't scare. Maybe there are Wasps." In his own slow mental suspension the first sergeant was afraid Larry would push the wrong button and attack their own scout ships or send out a selenium interceptor against a supply float, maybe against the relief ship. One man could destroy a base, and the best possible choice was this kid with no real whiskers. The eager beavers usually fell apart in an emergency.

RANKE COULD never forget the major on Venus, a chaplain of the Withholders. What they held back he never learned, but the officer had been a member of one of the 240 sects accredited to supply spiritual help to turn people toward the right path, whatever that was. The Withholders disbelieved in everything—sex, drink, and smoke—and the first sergeant had invoked the ire of his Holy Joe in a salvage battalion. "What happens to the human race if there is no indulgence of carnal appetites?"

The major, Stringent or Stringy by name, had glared.

The next time Ranke was too full of dry Venusians to turn out the company, the chaplain had awakened him after reveille and broken him down to buck private. The next eight years, while he earned his stripes back on Venus and Mars, under eight or nine other CO's, were a ratrace. A real pro had to take a lot—serve in Gas Treatment and Itchy-Fly Control to get back where he could have his own quarters and run an outfit the way it should be.

"Yappy son of a jackass had to

break me because I drank and he didn't." Ranke had a vivid satisfaction from knowing, through the grapevine, that the Withholder had been caught with a colonel's wife in a forbidden area.

With a wry smile, Ranke remembered that he had graduated from the Mapping and Coordinates School and held a degree, as high as one given to most ministers. In fact, his outspace pay was higher than a Stateside colonel's.

"Now on my last leg," he murmured. "I might be broken again. I might dislike this kid. I don't know. But if he fouls up, I might be reduced again. Maybe to staff. Why the hell do I have to get these rookies? Lt. Johns screamed when he thought he saw a whirligig spouting fire. I was blamed because I hadn't told him about the false aurora plutonisis. How can I tell a company officer what to do unless he listens?"

Ranke wished for his pension and no worries about the chances of a Wasp gun platform appearing around his post. If he'd had half the sense he owned at birth, he could have been a rich merchant instead of a servant of a corps dominated by swivel chair generals.

"What the hell. Let it go. I don't know the answers. Meanwhile, let's see what this kid's made of." He started to lift the gavel, but it froze in his hands.

Mars, Uranium City, Goldbrick Gulch—all nothing in his mind. "I just want to get my pension."

LARRY CARROLL flicked a hand to his tunic and set out a twin to the first whirling circle. This he set behind him so that other enlisted men could feel it. Nobody said anything. Cpl. Olson stood with his right arm poised in midair, suggesting the charge and the specifications. His ranting voice was lost in the echo chambers of his own mind as he registered the final tableau.

The accused spoke in a turgid voice. "Prepare for this and forget. One of your officers, Lt. Johns, has been shipped out." For effect he spoke in short sentences. "He left in the sky-drone that brought me here. I was sent to investigate morale. The poison from above can seep down to destroy the real workers. You are the real workers." He paused and repeated.

In objective time morning had come, but on this outstation only the chief NCO could rouse the men with his whistle. His hands were numb.

"In fifteen minutes, Sgt. Ranke, you will blow the whistle. Five minutes later you will ask the CO to transfer me to Station 17, on the grounds of incompetence. It is an easier post for recruits."

"Why sure." Ranke's voice was vague but his smile soft. "The skipper has his faults, but he does what I ask."

Nobody else in the room stirred.

"You will forget what has happened since Sgt. Ranke appeared with the charge sheet. You will forget the charge sheet." The whirring of the little compasses rode to a crescendo. "You will forget. You will forget."

Larry picked up the two stroboscopic analyzers and put them into opposite pockets of his black tunic. Just to make sure, he listened to the summary of the tickings. He smiled. It was the same old pattern. In the outstations, whether a few cubic miles of cinder or planetoids of nickel alloy, space fear rode minds. In their loneliness their frustrations, sometimes those apes but submerged by the conditioning of the service, broke out into animal noises.

"All right," Ranke grumbled sleepily.

"You deserve an explanation which no one else will hear." Larry held up his hands and let them fall softly. He was astonished that the first sergeant had a mind strong enough to break through the hypnosis. He made a mental note to recommend him for

training to Psych 1. Somewhere in his past a hiatus had deprived him of superior command. The reasons should be interesting to Plover 14, the code name of the chief head shrinker of all.

"Who are you?" Ranke growled. "I'll really prefer charges next time."

"You must understand—then forget—the real purpose of my visitation," Larry said. "I am here to check on morale and smooth out the rough spots. These little gadgets of mine are able to translate brain waves into thought patterns. The repetitions stay put—anger, malice, doubt, pride, and the urge to survive. They stay put in the sense that the under needle stays with your dominant thought all the time."

"How?" Ranke nodded in his chair. "I guess it's technical. I guess I was wrong about you. I'll transfer you out. You're a—a hazard anyway."

"My amplifier makes a synthesis loud enough or me to hear—alone."

"I'm sleepy." Ranke's head fell over his clasped hands.

"No one remembers anything but fantasy. No one remembers anything but health." Larry glanced backward at Sgt. Forbes, who sat on his bunk in an attitude of prayer. "Health. Peace of mind." Larry thudded his heels against the floor.

Olson's arm came down. "I charge the accused..." He paused to blush. "What am I doing up here—posing for pictures?"

"We just had a little party to congratulate Pvt. Carroll on his being transferred off this double-damned cinder heap. I don't know how you did it, kid." Ranke shook his head, trying to whirl the sleep out of his eyes.

"The lucky son," somebody yelled from the back.

The situation was normal. The false antagonisms rose again. Men bickered about the dimensions of their pin-up girls. Cpl. Olson challenged Pickens to an Indian wrestling contest. The card games began, and everybody tried to

remember who owed what. Pvt. Griggs claimed Cpl. Ort owed him \$400,000. "Let's cut for double or nothing."

Col. Lawrence A. Carroll packed his footlocker and wondered about Station 17. Presumably he'd be tried after 17 days' service there. Two more visita-

tions would entitle him to leave, and then he could spend a year at desk work before getting his own pension. He would forego another rejuvenation and settle on his Ozark farm, with his wife, his half-pay, and his own gold tooth, but that was in the rear, where nobody could see it.

The Reckoning

On page 116, you'll find the once-familiar Readers' Preference Coupon, which can be clipped out without marring the magazine. Many readers don't like to do this, so let me assure you-all again that *all* votes are counted, however received, so long as they come in before it's time to tote up the scores. On FUTURE and SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, this department will report on two issues back; but a six-months' time-lag is a bit too much. So we'll have to close the polls on this issue by January 15th in order to present your findings in the May issue of SFQ.

The distribution snarl-up resulted in many readers seeing the November issue much later than usual, so the number of votes on that issue was not as high as it might have been. Under the circumstances, point-scores would be meaningless; however, I can report that the voters selected Noel Loomis' "The Conduit" for first place, with Paul Janvier's "The Shadow Before" second, and Milton Lesser's "Do it Yourself" a close third. No story came out below par, although the "dislike" sign is not entirely absent from the records.

It helps, as I've said before, if you rate the entire issue, but this isn't obligatory; your vote will count in any case. Tie-listings are perfectly admissible. And if you dislike a story (as against listing a story in last place just because you liked the others better) an "x" will indicate your feelings. If you think a given story is really outstanding, mark it "A"; our tabulation system allows for both extremes, and appropriate credit or discredit will show up in the final listings.

There are five stories this time. "Below par" for this issue, then, would apply to any story whose final point-score was 4 or higher; 3 and any percentage above would be "fair" or average in the consensus.

I'll be looking for those ballots!



CHIP ON THE SHOULDER

Novelet

by Charles L.
Fontenay

It was vitally important that the Allerdicians be convinced that Earth had abandoned its warlike ways. Then the delegation met the men of Allerdice, and the first thing they saw was a brawl...

EVAN KILGRU, psycho-sociologist for the Earthship *Ambassador*, was passing by the closed door of the spacemen's wardroom when he was halted by sounds of conflict inside. There was the noise of scuffling, the crash of a falling piece of furniture and the low, eager voices of spacemen cheering on the combatants.

Evan said a dirty word under his breath and pushed open the double doors. The fighters, both husky men, were shirtless and squared off in the center of the room; a half dozen off-duty spacemen stood around them.

Evan recognized the men who were fighting: Lower Jetman Chirki Boering, the ship's recorder, and Topblast Spaceman Sulli Devlin, the gunnery crew chief. And Boering was an officer.

Chirki tossed back his long blond hair, blew aside the ends of his flowing mustache and moved in cautiously. Sulli backed away, circling, his fists ready.

"Mister Boering" barked Evan with as much authority as his rather high voice could command.

The two men stiffened and turned to face him. Their audience began to disperse as quietly as possible.

"Mister Boering, what sort of discipline is this?" demanded Evan. "Officers do *not* fight with enlisted spacemen."

Chirki grinned and began to pull on his shirt. There was a cut on one of his leathery cheeks that bled slightly, and a puffiness below one blue eye. Sulli stood like a ramrod, breathing hard, awaiting permission to relax.

"Just a friendly disagreement," said Chirki. "Sulli thought the pie stank. The chief messman's a little fellow, so I took up for him."

"Spaceman Devlin, you may go," said Evan. "Since Mister Boering obviously instigated this disgraceful brawl, you won't be disciplined this

time; but don't let it happen again."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir," said Sulli, relaxing. He picked up his shirt and left the wardroom.

Evan cast a critical eye over Chirki, who was still smiling unrepentantly. Evan sighed. He outranked Chirki; all the other officers did. Chirki was the lowest ranking officer aboard, and as a result he drew all the nuisance assignments, like mess officer, in addition to his primary duties as recorder. But Chirki was not far removed from a civilian in length of service, and he remained a civilian at heart. He was woefully lacking in respect to his superiors, and he insisted on fraternizing with the enlisted personnel.

"It's lucky I stopped by," said Evan. "The Allerdician delegation is due in a few minutes, and you're expected to be present. You better get cleaned up."

CHIRKI went into the kitchen and reappeared a few minutes later. There was still a puffiness to his eye, but he looked presentable.

"Another thing," said Evan as they left the wardroom. "This is a hell of a time for a fist fight; you know how important it is for us to convince the Allerdicians we're peaceful people."

Chirki snorted. "We'd better act natural and let them know we're normal human beings."

"You leave the psycho-sociology to me, my lad," snapped Evan, nettled. "It's my job."

They walked down the corridor toward the officers' wardroom. As they passed a port, Evan stopped and peered out. "Here they come," he said.

"Welcoming delegation or internment crew?" asked Chirki.

A puzzled frown creased Evan's brow. "It's hard to say. They look more like a bunch of boys shuffling home from school."

Chirki moved to Evan's side.

The spherical Earthship rested in an improvised cradle between two tapered

ships from worlds of nearby stars, like a ping-pong ball between a pair of up-ended cigars. The purple sun of the planet Allerdice shone impartially on all three, casting their shadows toward the blocky buildings and square towers of Ficia, capital city of Allerdice.

There were four men in the approaching Allerdician group, their long shadows stretching back toward the city. They were informally, almost roughly clad in tunics, short capes, knee-length trousers and shoes that flared at their tops.

The two lead men were pushing and hauling at each other, occasionally pausing to scuffle while the other two men stopped and waited patiently. At one point, one of them tripped the other, who sprawled in the dust of the spaceport. The fallen one arose and chased his tormentor around the other two men in a circle several times.

At last the squabbling group disappeared under the curve of the hull. Evan turned away from the port with a non-plussed shake of his head. "That can't be the official delegation!"

But it was.

CAPTAIN PAAVO VIDSON and the other officers of the *Ambassador* were seated around the big table in the officers' wardroom. Paavo nodded at Evan and Chirki as they entered.

It would have been difficult from the expressions and monosyllabic conversation of the *Ambassador's* officers to determine whether they were awaiting doom or deliverance. They didn't know, themselves.

In the center of the table, a coffee-pot bubbled with an assuredness that was sadly misplaced in such a gathering. Upper Jetman Fetter, who outranked only Chirki, was gravely refilling the cups, a task he thankfully turned over to Chirki.

"Mister Kilgru," said Chirki solemnly as he poured the captain's coffee, "has been chastising me for a

friendly bout with one of my inferiors."

"I didn't know you had inferiors, Chirki," remarked Fetter unkindly.

"In rank," elaborated Chirki. "And no sooner am I chastised than he peeks out the port at the approaching Allerdician dignitaries, and what do you think? They're having a bout, too, and it doesn't look so friendly."

"Get off my back, Chirki," said Evan without rancor. "If you can't have faith in psycho-sociology now, where are we?"

"In a hell of a fix, either way," answered Chirki bluntly. "Psycho-sociology sure did a neat job, on Earth, didn't it?"

THAT HIT a sore spot.

"Politicians did that!" retorted Evan angrily. "And you know it!"

Politicians or psycho-sociologists, someone had certainly "done a neat job" on Earth. After centuries of peace and unification—during which it had colonized planets of a hundred star systems and established a far-flung commercial empire—the civilization of Earth had exploded suddenly into war, like a nova. All the ferocity that had been leashed for so many generations seemed to surge to the fore at once, blasting the Lunar base, the colonies of the Solar System and, most of all, Earth itself, in a fury of flame and passion.

Terrestrial civilization had tottered in that holocaust. Space travel had been one of the first casualties, and the star colonies soon quarantined the seething Solar System. Earth, the mother of man, was left alone, to destroy herself if she chose.

Earth had not destroyed herself, but it had taken three centuries for terrestrial humankind to climb back from the wreckage of that war and begin once again to seek the stars. Working from what records had been saved, Earthmen sought once again to

establish contact with their former colonies in other star systems.

It was a difficult, ticklish business, trying to get established once more as a responsible partner in the stable interstellar civilization, so soon after such a barbarous exhibition as a planetary war. One by one, the worlds of the nearer star systems accepted Earth again, albeit some maintained suspicious reservations. Allerdice was the farthest yet that Earthmen had gone suing for recognition—and recognition by Allerdice was most important of all.

THE DOOR to the wardroom opened, and Sulli Devlin entered. Somehow, Sulli had managed to change to dress scarlet in the short interval since the altercation in the spacemen's wardroom. The only mark of the battle on him was a swollen lip. Sulli stood straight as a spear beside the open door, his rock-like jaw thrust out. "The Allerdician delegation, sirs," he announced.

There was the squawl of opposing voices in the corridor outside, and the Allerdician delegation progressed jerkily into the wardroom. The two leaders, who were doing all the afguing, were a Laurel-and-Hardy pair of opposites. The rotund one wore a fringe of beard, the tall one was stooped, lugubrious and lantern-jawed. Apparently quite unembarrassed at being ushered into the presence of the Earthmen, they continued their argument at the tops of their respective voices.

"As representatives of Earth..." began Paavo soberly, arising and holding out his hand. He stopped, mouth open.

The roly-poly Allerdician pushed the other away violently and advanced toward Paavo, his whiskers wagging. The tall one, recovering his balance with remarkable quickness, leaped after the short one, grabbed him by the shoulder and hauled him back. They

stood face-to-face, shouting at each other, ignoring the Earthmen.

Paavo looked helplessly at Evan. Evan shrugged. Chirki grinned.

"The language is a variant of English," Evan shouted above the din. "I can't understand it, though; they're talking too fast."

The two Allerdicians were pushing each other, vigorously and in turn, like angry children. Their companions stood gravely behind them, apparently unconcerned.

"Switch on the recorder," ordered Paavo belatedly. "We ought to have a record of this for deciphering."

As Chirki obeyed, the tall Allerdician backed away from his opponent. The first word the recorder got was the word he shouted.

"*Lasseryer!*" was the way it came out later on tape.

The round one's face lit up with an expression of pure joy.

"*Lasseryer!*" he snapped back, and bored in, slugging.

It was quite a fight for a few minutes. At last, the tall one got the fat one down and sat on him. Through it all, the Earthmen gaped, reluctant to interfere as long as the other two Allerdicians seemed so calm about it.

They arose from the floor, brushing off their rumpled clothing. Then, to the Earthmen's surprise, the tall one—the winner of the scuffle—backed away and bowed low to his defeated opponent. The fat one nodded briefly, and marched triumphantly forward to greet Paavo, not with a handshake, but an upraised palm and a ridiculous wiggle of the fingers.

At Evan's nudge, Paavo replied in kind, and the conference was on.

2

THERE WAS some difficulty achieving mutual understanding, at first; but this was a field in

which Evan was an acknowledged expert. After playing back some of the Allerdicians' words on tape several times, he got the hang of their language and was able to act as an interpreter.

The fat Allerdician, it developed, was Lob bent, representative of Villib, the *itfizen* of Allerdice. There was a formal exchange of amenities—a little to the surprise of Evan, after the Allerdicians' original uncouthness. Then the conference got down to business with breathtaking suddenness.

Lob bent evidently had received detailed instructions. When Paavo had explained Earth's interest in gaining Allerdician recognition as a peaceful member of the galactic community, Lob bent leaned back in his chair, protruded his cheeks and patted his stomach.

"Let us be quite honest, Captain," he said. The term he used was "Earth visitor," but Evan discreetly interpreted it to Paavo as "captain." "You of Earth know that Allerdice, as head of the fifteen worlds of the Allerdician Union, is the most powerful force in the galaxy today. You know that Allerdice, in agreement with other planets of the Union, holds to the policy of occupying barbarous worlds and prohibiting them from space flight until they have been reeducated."

"When you ask that Allerdice recognize Earth, what you are asking is that Allerdice do not occupy Earth, and strip Earth of the potentiality for wars against other worlds. Is that not correct?"

Evan was shocked at this bald statement of fact. Paavo looked stunned when the psycho-sociologist translated.

"We ask that Allerdice recognize Earth as a peaceful world," replied Paavo stiffly. "Earth would resist any unjustified occupation."

"Resistance would be unavailing against the fleet of fifteen worlds," said Lob bent. "The worlds in Earth's sector would not assist Earth against

Allerdice. Earth must prove to Allerdice it is a peaceful world."

"Space!" exploded Paavo, ignoring Evan's frantic gestures. At the exclamation, Lobtent and the tall Allerdician exchanged knowing nods. "What must Earth do to prove its peaceful intentions? You have Earth's word; if you doubt it, why haven't you sent a peaceful inspection delegation to Earth?"

"Earth sues for recognition, not Allerdice," answered Lobtent brusquely. "So Earth sends representatives to Allerdice. Do you not understand now?"

"No, I don't," said Paavo, swallowing his anger and rubbing his arm where Evan had pinched it frantically.

"You represent Earth here," said Lobtent. "We of Allerdice have a psycho-sociological tradition. We can tell from your actions whether the world from which you come has a reasonable chance to peace."

IN ESSENCE, that ended the conference. After formal goodbyes, the Allerdician delegation left. The voices of their two leaders rose in argument as they vanished down the corridor.

"Of all the bald insolence!" raged Paavo. "They fight right in front of us, and then have the nerve to doubt that *we're* peaceful people!"

"Like I told Evan, Captain," said Chirki with a smile. "We ought to..."

"Shut up!" roared Paavo. "Evan, what about it?"

"I don't know," replied Evan thoughtfully. "Most of the records we had on Allerdice were destroyed, and they've developed for three centuries since then, anyhow. We know the planet was settled under the auspices of a group of psycho-sociologists led by Kentu Allerdice, and our advance information is that they have a civilization of the highest, most stable type..."

"Stable!" erupted Paavo. "When a diplomatic delegation yaks and squab-

bles right in front of us? Even comes to blows? How stable is that?"

"Well, I don't know," repeated Evan. "They may be testing us, or that may have been a deliberate insult. If it was an insult, they still may be testing us. There are a couple of inconsistencies about them that puzzle me. One of them was that word '*lasseryer*' they hollered at each other."

"Obviously an insult," said Paavo. "It brought on a fight."

"Maybe. That's the most logical explanation. But did you notice that the tall one won the fight? It looked as though they were fighting over which one was to have the honor of being the spokesman to us. But the tall one won, yet the fat one, Lobtent, took over as spokesman."

"An insult to us," conjectured Paavo. "The fat one lost, and had to suffer the indignity of speaking to the lowly Earthmen."

Evan smiled. "Don't let your sense of our inferiority influence your opinion."

"Inferiority?" snarled Paavo. "To them?"

"*We're* the ones who came here asking recognition," Evan reminded. "But Lobtent was a little too triumphant about his position as spokesman for your theory to make sense. I think the key to the whole business is in that expression, '*lasseryer*,' and I'm going to try to break it down."

"If it isn't an insult, what do you think it is?" asked Paavo.

"I haven't the slightest idea. Whatever it is, it sure gets action."

"YOU SEEMED to understand their language pretty well, after you got started."

"Yes, it's English, changed by long dissociation from the source—and I expect the source language on Earth has changed, too. I follow it partly from context. But chasing down the semantics of a single word is a harder propo-

sition. They've switched the sounds of some similar letters, like 'p' and 'b' and 'v.' and in some cases the words have changed to things that sound only vaguely like the originals. I rather suspect 'Lobbent' used to be 'Robert'—an ancient English name—and I'm almost sure 'Villib' was once 'Phillip.' But 'lasseryer' could be an entirely new word they've invented here."

"Well, aside from that, we seem to be guinea pigs," said Paavo, leaning back and clasping his hands together. "How do you suggest we react?"

"Frankly, sir, I'm scared. Without knowing more about the Allerdicians, I don't know how they'll interpret anything we do."

"Why not just act natural?" suggested Chirki. "Or have I brought that up before?"

"Natural?" repeated Evan. "They're going to interpret from our actions whether Earth is peaceful or still warlike. How do any of us act differently now in our personal reactions than our fathers did when Earth was tangled up in a vicious war? I'm frank to say I don't know, and I'm a psycho-sociologist. They'll probably be looking for little things. Our psycho-sociology hasn't progressed far enough yet to get into such fine differentiations of human reactions."

"Well," argued Chirki, "if they're such fine psycho-sociologists, wouldn't you think they'd interpret our natural actions correctly? After all, Earth is peaceful, isn't it?"

"I'm scared," said Evan again. "One wrong move could put Earth under military occupation. I wish we could just hang around the ship and not have to deal with the Allerdicians at all."

"Well, we can't," said Paavo. "You've got to take a guard tomorrow and deliver our written proposal to their what's-it... Villib."

"Great space!" exclaimed Evan, appalled at being forced into action so soon. "Couldn't you have given that to their delegation?"

"I'm afraid this is outside your psycho-sociological jurisdiction," said Paavo. "My orders were that it be delivered to the head man of Allerdice, personally. But, as psycho-sociologist, you'll be in charge of the delivery and responsible for the behavior of the men who go with you."

"Yes, sir," said Evan unhappily. "If I must, I suppose I must."

"And you'd better work like hell to figure out the right pitch for these people," Paavo warned. "Earth knows Allerdice's general attitude, but nobody realized they were quite so direct about it. If we don't get that recognition in a few days, we're going to make a run for it to warn Earth of Allerdice's plans for occupation."

"But that would mean certain war with Allerdice!" protested Evan frantically.

"I can't take chances," said Paavo. "If there's to be war, we don't want Earth to be caught by surprise."

3

EVAN STOOD erect in the crimson morning of Allerdice and snapped sharp instructions to the half dozen men assigned to accompany him into the city of Ficia. He had picked them carefully, for stability and intelligence, and Sulli Devlin was the top enlisted spaceman of the group. Evan had not particularly wanted Chirki Beorging along, but Chirki's title of "recorder" meant actually that he was the expedition's historian, and he was expected to be on the spot for such an occasion.

The men were resplendent in the scarlet-and-silver full-dress uniforms of Earth's Space Navy—crash helmets with cocked plumes, tunics with full sleeves gathered at the wrists, baggy trousers gathered at the ankles, space boots. On the shoulders of Evan's uniform were the braided epaulets of an

Upper Wingman, a rank on a par with that of the *Ambassador's* executive officer. He felt uncomfortable in full dress, as he always did. Evan was rather chubby.

A hundred and fifty yards away, there was a bustle of activity as the crew of one of the other two ships prepared for blastoff. Vehicles rumbled, men shouted and metal clanked against metal. Underlying all the commotion was the throbbing whine of the other-world ship's powerful dynamos.

"We have to be careful," Evan was warning the attentive group. "Whatever these people do, we can't react, until we're sure what they mean. If they hiss at us, we can't get angry, because that may be their way of applauding us. And let the women alone!"

A solitary figure in short pants, with a long feather curling from a ridiculous cap, trudged across the spaceport toward them. He was a skinny little man, with square-rimmed spectacles on his nose.

"I'm Lusser," he introduced himself in a squeaky voice, wagging his fingers. "I've come to conduct you to Villib. *Lasseryer*?"

The word was a question, spoken almost hopefully, not the wrathful expletives the others had used. Evan hesitated. Should he reply in kind, with the same word? It might mean something like "Let's go." On the other hand, it might mean something that would get him in trouble if he repeated it. Yesterday the word had been used, and the man to whom it was addressed had attacked its user.

"I'm Evan Kilgru," Evan said slowly and distinctly, wagging his own fingers back. "We look forward with pleasure to an audience with your *itfizen*, and we are honored that such a distinguished gentleman will conduct us."

UNACCOUNTABLY, Lusser looked disappointed. But he led the way

across the spaceport, Evan and Chirki at his heels and the small detachment of brightly-uniformed men marching in formation behind them.

"I think you were a little bit rigid in your instructions to the men," said Chirki as they walked. "I still think the best course is to act natural."

"Look, Chirki," said Evan patiently, "we don't know what '*natural*' is to these people. They proved that with their performance yesterday. What they did must have been natural to them, but we wouldn't do it, and we don't know what it means. By the same token, we don't know how they are going to interpret whatever we do."

"Wasn't Allerdice settled by psycho-sociologists?" demanded Chirki. "You're a psycho-sociologist. You ought to be able to estimate how they look at things."

"Well...there are different schools of psycho-sociology," said Evan reluctantly. "This Kentu Allerdice, who led the First Allerdice colony, belonged to a school that is extinct now on Earth. They believed healthy motions were guaranteed by letting off steam now and then."

"Well, for Pete's sake, let's let off a little steam, then," said Chirki. "That's obviously what those characters were doing in the wardroom yesterday."

"What does *lasseryer* mean, and would it mean anything different to them if we said it?" countered Evan. "In the ancient American West you could call a man an illegitimate child if he was your friend, but if he was a stranger he'd shoot hell out of you for it. Letting off steam can be dangerous if you don't know what you're doing. Besides, their psycho-sociological theories could have changed a lot in a few centuries."

The city of Ficia was clean, but Evan was not impressed with its beauty. Most of the buildings were square and unadorned, and there was no conformity in the pattern of their construction such as, say, in the beauti-

fully planned cities of Sirius XV.

They evidently were out before the morning rush hour. There were few people on the streets through which they marched, and most buildings were closed. The people they passed stared at them curiously, shouted after them incomprehensibly or just laughed.

THEIR AUDIENCE with Villib, in a garden-surrounded structure that appeared to be something in the nature of a palace, was brief, pleasant and to the point. Evan and Chirki, conducted in by Lusser while the enlisted spacemen waited in an adjoining patio, were refreshed with drinks of some sort of semi-sweet fruit juice. Evan handed over the draft of the recognition agreement they hoped Villib would sign. Villib glanced over it, laid it aside and bade them a courteous farewell.

Evidently, the Allerdicians meant what they said. The Earthmen were on trial, and the paper would not be signed until they had proved themselves.

Maybe Villib had passed word to the populace when they left, or maybe it was just that the streets were getting crowded by the time they started back to the ship. Whatever it was, their return soon began to take on strongly nightmarish aspects.

From the first, it seemed to Evan that the shouts of bystanders as they passed were louder and more offensive. He thought he might be imagining this, though, because of his own nervousness.

But when pedestrians began to move into the Earthmen's little marching column, that was something definitely new and ominous. They were marching two abreast, Evan walking beside Lusser at the head of the group. At first some of the pedestrians just walked down between the ranks, gaining evident enjoyment from the action. Then a few of them began to wind in and out between the men, almost tripping some of them on a couple of occasions.

The Earthmen marched onward, grimly. Evan counted the blocks as

they walked. They were still a good quarter of a mile from the spaceport when two Allerdicians, anticipating the line of their march, stood grinning square in the path of the double column.

Without a word, Evan led his men around them. Lusser fell back, and for a moment Evan thought he would protest to their interceptors. But, seeing them moving on, Lusser ran after them, caught up with them and rejoined Evan. He looked at Evan curiously, but said nothing.

It got worse before it got better—if it could be said to have gotten better at all. Half a block beyond this incident, a group of Allerdicians blocked the sidewalk completely. There was no way around them without going out into the street, and vehicular traffic was too heavy for that.

Evan halted his men when they reached the group, anticipating trouble. The Allerdicians were too obviously watching them for the sidewalk block to be accidental.

A burly Allerdician detached himself from the group and stepped up to Evan. He towered a head above Evan. He spat to one side and snapped: "*Lasseryer!*"

Evan's heart sank. There was that key word again, and he had no idea how to reply to it. "I'd appreciate your letting us by," he said courteously but firmly, wagging his fingers hopefully at the Allerdician. "We're anxious to reach the spaceport."

"*LASSERYER!*" yelled the Allerdician in his face.

The volume of it almost knocked Evan down. He staggered slightly. Then, for want of something better to do, he shook his head decisively and made as if to step by the man.

THE ALLERDICIAN seized him by the shoulders and ripped the braided epaulets off with one powerful wrench. Evan's plumed helmet fell to the sidewalk with a clatter.

As though it were a signal, the other Allerdicians descended on Chirki and the enlisted spacemen with a howl. Their hands ripped the colorful uniforms of the Earthmen. The Earthmen were torn out of formation, their clothing pulled awry by their attackers. Half a scarlet tunic flew out of the melee and descended on one of the interested onlookers who were stopping their cars to watch.

Just in time, Evan heard Sulli's enraged bawl; amplified by Chirki's joyous shout and angry squawls from the other men. He pulled himself from the mauling grasp of the big Allerdician.

"Tention!" he cried above the hubbub. "Don't resist, men! Dammit, don't resist, I say! They're trying to test us; for Earth's sake, don't resist!"

His frantic yells brought a sudden subsidence in the semi-brawl. Earthmen and Allerdicians paused, their surprised faces turning toward him. The Earthmen straightened their shoulders, striving for military bearing despite their tattered uniforms. The Allerdicians still held them, by arms, legs, collars.

Before hostilities could be resumed, Lusser stepped up to the big Allerdician who had manhandled Evan.

"Lasseryer!" he growled, drawing himself to his full height—which wasn't very much.

"Lasseryer!" shouted the other Allerdician in glee, and laid Lusser out on the sidewalk with a single blow to the stomach.

A dead hush fell over the scene as the Allerdicians waited for Lusser to recover consciousness. They moved away from the tattered, angry Earthmen and stood solemnly in groups, watching the crumpled form on the sidewalk.

After a few moments, Lusser opened his eyes slowly, groaned, shook his head and arose unsteadily. He hesitated, looking around, then advanced on his attacker in a brisk, businesslike

fashion. But the fight was not resumed. The two men retired to one side and talked earnestly in a low voice, while the other Allerdicians murmured quietly among themselves.

There was no block across the sidewalk now, and Evan was tempted to resume his march. But he decided to wait on Lusser. There was no way of telling what the Allerdicians' reactions would be if he tried to get out of there.

LUSSEr broke off his conversation and returned to Evan.

"We shall go to your ship now," he said officiously.

Dubiously, Evan gave the command to march. They moved off in formation. The Allerdicians made no move to interfere.

Whatever had happened, the word seemed to have gotten around. They were not molested again as they proceeded down the street. Evan was unable to contain his curiosity.

"What did you say to that fellow?" he asked Lusser. "He knocked you down, but you evidently talked him out of doing anything more."

"I took responsibility for you and the other Earthmen," said Lusser with something of contempt in his voice. "I told him you are under my command; I explained to him that you knew no better."

"No better than what?"

"We of Allerdice do not like uniforms and marching," said Lusser.

They marched on into the spaceport. Even knew the men were furious, and he didn't blame them. The trouble was that the Allerdicians were on top. Maybe it was part of their social set-up to attack visitors with impunity; but maybe if the visitors fought back, that would prove to them that Earthmen weren't peaceful, as they claimed, but were quick-tempered and warlike.

Evan's shoulders sagged. On them he felt the heavy responsibility of warding off the military occupation of Earth by soldiers from a foreign world.

Maybe, if Lusser was right, they would be soldiers without uniforms and soldiers who didn't march in formation, but Evan would be willing to bet his psycho-sociology diploma they'd be well armed.

4

"BY SATURN, Paavo," Evan told the captain, "there'll be no more marching, and we'd better require that any men who leave the spaceport go out of uniform. As I said before, I wish we could just hole up inside the ship."

"But you don't think we can?" said Paavo.

"No. They're studying us to determine if Earth is peaceful, and they can't study us if we're not circulating around to be studied. And they don't give a hang whether we let them figure us out or not."

"All right," said Paavo. "If you want the men to circulate, I'll permit it, as long as there aren't too many out at a time. Whatever you have in mind, though, Evan, you'd better pull it off fast. If we don't get favorable action out of Allerdice in three days, we're blasting out of here."

Evan was shocked. "Three days! That's pretty short notice, Paavo. I'm not sure that *any* good psycho-sociologist could be expected to determine a world's attitude from the actions of such a small group in so little time."

"Maybe not, but you have to look at my side of it. If Earth isn't warned of Allerdician plans for occupation, I'm responsible."

"And if it's going to be war with Allerdice, instead of peace, I'm responsible," interrupted Evan. "That's my job on this expedition."

"Right, but I'm still captain. And this is the chance I can't take: they may decide from our actions that Earth *isn't* peaceful. If and when they do,

this ship won't have a chance of getting off of Allerdice."

He gestured dismissal. Evan sighed and left Paavo's cubbyhole of an office.

He conceded the justice of Paavo's concern. The captain was in a tight spot. But he didn't see how Paavo could reasonably expect the Allerdicians to decide the Earthmen were peaceful in three days, when he seemed to feel they wouldn't decide the Earthmen were warlike in the same space of time.

The trouble was that Evan didn't have any sort of plan at all. The Allerdicians' mental processes were still as unknown to him as they had been at the beginning. All he could do was turn a few men loose in the city and trust to luck.

EVAN DESCENDED from the control deck through the navigation to the upper centerdeck. Chirki Beorging was sitting in a chair outside the enlisted wardroom, tilted back comfortably against the wall.

"Say, Evan," called Chirki as Evan started past him toward the companionway down to the mid-centerdeck.

Evan stopped.

"Have you tried to figure out what these Allerdicians are like from history?" asked Chirki.

"Psycho-sociology is based partly on the study of historical factors," Evan reminded him. "But we don't know enough about the Allerdicians' history to draw any conclusions."

"You know the history of Kentu Allerdice, who led the original settlers of the planet," said Chirki, pulling at his long mustache. "Or you should. If you don't, I do; he was a troublemaker."

"That helps. It looks like all the Allerdicians are," retorted Evan, and started on.

"Well, I have a suggestion to make," said Chirki, raising his voice.

Evan paused at the top of the com-

panionway. "What is it?" he asked in a pained voice.

"I expect the Allerdicians are civilized enough to write," said Chirki with a huge grin. "Maybe they'd let you look at their own histories of themselves."

Evan snorted and moved on. At the moment, he had another recourse in mind.

Going down to the lower centerdeck, Evan went out through the ship's big circular port and walked down the long ramp. He crossed the spaceport to the tall other-world ship that still rested there, identified himself to the swarthy guard and asked to see the captain.

Captain Nov-Kim of the Decembian ship *Grik* received Evan in a tiny cubicle off the control deck high in the nose of the ship. He spoke a broken variety of the Allerdicians' version of English, indicating that it was far from his native tongue, but Evan was able to understand him.

Evan outlined the problem facing the Earthmen.

"Your people obviously have had contact with the Allerdicians for some time," said Evan. "We need your help. Perhaps you can tell us something of their mental processes."

Nov-Kim smiled.

"You may not know," he said. "Decembu is world of Allerdician Union. Why we help you? We like to know also if Earth is peaceful. We let you prove this to Allerdice."

"At least," persisted Evan, "tell me what they mean by that word '*Lasseryer*.'"

"Ha!" exclaimed the Decembian. "I know tricks of psycho men. That word is key word. I not tell you that."

Morosely, Evan made his way back to the *Ambassador*.

A KEY WORD. That agreed with Evan's estimate. What in space could it mean?

He had tried his semantics tests to it to no avail, but he tried them again.

L was a sound without any close variants, although *R* and *N* were similar. Since it was the initial sound, the chances were it was not a variant. The two *Rs*, too, probably were accurate renditions, although the first *R* might be an *N*, or, less likely, an *L*. The final *R* could be an *N*. The *Ss* could only be *Z*, *ZH* or *TH* if they were not original sounds. Possibly, the first *R* and/or the *Y* should be slurred.

Evan tried *lazzeryer*, *latherer*, *las-senyen*, *lazzelyer*. He swore softly. The trouble was, there was no context to help in interpretation. The best he could get was "*lassoer*," which meant nothing.

It might be an Allerdician word without English roots.

As a matter of fact, Chirki's suggestion had some merit, he thought. He did not expect to pick up any really helpful information from Allerdician history.

But... textbooks on Allerdician psycho-sociology might be something else!

Evan determined to visit the library in Ficia, if there was one, the very next day.

5

A DOZEN men—a third of the crew—were given liberty the next day. Paavo's order also specified that officers were free to go into the city of Ficia at any time they were not on duty. No uniforms, the order said—and no trouble!

Evan, who would have been a free agent under the circumstances anyhow, made inquiries and headed toward Ficia's public library.

Late that afternoon, he walked slowly and despondently back toward the ship. Discouraged at the results of his research, he was disturbingly conscious that a dozen spacemen and several officers had been circulating among the people of Ficia all day, flaunting their reactions for all to see.

He worried over the conclusions the Allerdician psycho-sociologists might draw from them. He worried that one or more of the Earthmen might be pushed beyond endurance and start a fight that would be disastrous to their hopes.

At a street intersection, he fell in with Sulli Devlin, and they walked together.

"Having any luck, sir?" asked Sulli.

"I'm afraid not," admitted Evan. "I sank up to my ears in Allerdician history, but I couldn't find anything of great value. It's true the Allerdicians have maintained peace here and on the neighboring worlds, but all I can find is the facts, without any insight into the reasons."

"Mister Beorging said you were going to look into their psycho-sociological textbooks. You found nothing there, either?"

Evan laughed shortly. "That section of the library was sealed off to me. The Allerdicians aren't dumb enough to tip their hand that way. They've seen to it that we'll work it out for ourselves."

"Meaning no disrespect, sir," said Sulli, "I thought all psycho-sociologists studied out of the same textbook."

"No," answered Evan with a smile, "I'm afraid not. There are almost as many schools of psycho-sociology as there are church sects. It's far from an exact science. I know a good deal about the original theories of Kentu Allerdice and his school, but I don't know the direction of their development here."

They walked on in silence for a few moments.

"I ran across Russell today," volunteered Sulli. "I got the impression from him the Allerdicians like us pretty well."

"Russell?" repeated Evan, trying to place the name. He knew none of the member of the *Ambassador's* crew by that name.

"You know, sir, that character with

the eyeglasses who acted as our guide. I can't think of his real name, but it sounds like 'Russell.'"

"Lusser," Evan informed him. "It probably is a derivation from 'Russell'..."

He stopped, his mouth falling open.

"By Sirius, Sulli!" he exclaimed. "That's it! Let's get back to the ship!"

WITH THE puzzled Sulli in tow, Evan started off at a fast walk. They rounded the next corner and walked straight into trouble. Chirki Beorging had been pushed too far.

About fifty feet from the intersection, Chirki and two other spacemen were ranged defiantly before half a dozen Allerdicians.

From the hunch of Chirki's shoulders, he was about to wade in.

"Mister Beorging!" shouted Sulli, and the big man half turned toward them. They hurried up.

"What is it, Chirki?" asked Evan.

"These fellows won't let us by, Evan," growled Chirki. His brows were knit and his face was like a thundercloud. "They keep yelling *lasseryer* at us, and when we try to go around them, they push us back. They won't even let us turn around and go back the way we came."

As if to emphasize his words, one Allerdician moved in close and pushed Chirki violently. Chirki staggered against Evan.

"*Lasseryer!*" shouted the Allerdician.

Chirki turned, his fists clenched.

"Wait, sir!" cried Sulli. "Don't forget the instructions. We've got to keep our heads, sir!"

"That order is countermanded," said Evan coolly. "Slug him, Mister Beorging!"

Chirki froze, surprise written on his face. "What was that?" he demanded incredulously.

"Five Earthmen against six Allerdicians is even up," said Evan, rolling up

his sleeves, "I said give it to him, Chirki."

With a shout of pure joy, Chirki laid the Allerdician out on the sidewalk with a single blow. Sulli's gratified roar sounded like the bellow of a bull as he and Evan joined the fray.

What followed was a very satisfactory free-for-all. There were other Allerdicians in the vicinity, and quite a few of them got into it before the Earthmen were battered into submission.

EVAN KILGRU and Chirki Beorg-ing stood before Captain Paavo Vidson of the *Ambassador*, as near at attention as their aching backs would permit. The clothes of both were in tatters. Chirki sported a beautiful shiner and Evan, less apt at combat, was almost unrecognizable with a face puffed all out of shape.

"By Saturn, Evan, I'd courtmartial both of you, except for one thing," said Paavo sternly.

Evan grinned, as well as he could. "Our reprieve must have come through rather quickly, sir," he ventured.

"Reprieve? You could call it that." Paavo pulled a paper from his desk drawer and studied it. "Villib signed Allerdician recognition of Earth. It came while you belligerent idiots were being escorted here under arrest."

"Yes, sir. That was the reprieve to which I was referring. I thought we might have to sample the brig for a few days before he decided we were right fellows."

Paavo leaned back and studied him quizzically.

"You seem blasted sure of yourself," he commented. "Maybe you can tell me just what psycho-sociological gimmick causes Villib to decide Earth's a peaceful within an hour after you and our other noble thugs have just sent a round dozen of his citizens to the hospital."

"Yes, sir," replied Evan happily. "The Allerdicians still follow the basic

psycho-sociological concepts of the colony's founder, Kentu Allerdice. They believe that man, being a combative animal by nature, builds up powerful emotional tensions which, if not alleviated, can override his judgment and logic. They look upon war, among other phenomena, as the result of a psychosis which is created by the continual building up of such tensions under the rigid restraints required by civilized cooperation."

"Savages fight wars," remarked Paavo.

"Brief ones, on a small scale," said Evan. "And if you don't think savages are bothered by civilized restraints, you ought to study the tight taboo system of most savages tribes."

"Point accepted," said Paavo. "Go on."

"WELL, TO prevent these tensions from building to the psychosis level, the Allerdicians have accepted a means of relieving these tensions into the structure of their society. It's sort of a means of blowing off steam. The idea is, if your neighbor just irritates the hell out of you, you holler *'lasseryer'* at him. If he agrees, you slug it out, and anything goes short of mayhem. The beauty of it is that, after all your combative instincts have been beaten out of you, you get together with the other fellow and settle your disputes reasonably.

"When we demonstrated to the Allerdicians that Earthmen could be goaded into...ah...relieving our emotional tensions in the same manner, they decided Earth could be trusted reasonably to keep the peace with other worlds. All they wanted for proof was to get us into a good fist fight."

"So that's the explanation for that performance the Allerdician delegation put on here at the ship?" suggested Paavo.

"Yes, sir. Lobbent was the official spokesman, but the other Allerdician

didn't approve of his method of approach. So he challenged Lobtent, whipped him in a scuffle, got all the irritation out of his system by direct action and then yielded to the inevitable—and Lobtent did things his own way after all. That's their whole idea."

"So Chirki was right, then?" murmured Paavo.

"Chirki, sir?"

"Chirki was the one who wanted to act natural," Paavo reminded him. "He seems to have been a better psychosociologist than you, Evan."

"No, sir, it isn't quite that simple," replied Evan, with a sidelong smile at Chirki. Since they had fought side by side, Evan had decided the big man wasn't such a bad fellow after all. "Psycho-sociology isn't a matter of guesswork. No, sir, Sulli was the one who tipped me to the solution."

"Sulli?"

"Yes, sir. My difficulties in understanding the Allerdictian language were that the original English had been changed by sight alterations of some of the sounds in many words. That applied particularly to the key word *lasseryer*, because it was out of context."

"I don't see how Sulli could help," said Paavo. "He's no linguist."

"That's just it, sir. Not being a linguist, he had difficulty remembering the Allerdictian version of words and

tended to lapse back into the English from which they were derived. When that happened with the name *Lusser*—which was a derivation of '*Russell*'—it dawned on me."

Paavo leaned back and stared at him quizzically.

"We seem to have come out of this all right," he said slowly. "Allerdice has recognized Earth and we don't have to worry about military occupation. The men who were with you are happy about their brawl, and the rest of the men are happy at the prospect of getting into one of their own. But, Evan, the devious ways of psychosociology still escape me. How in space could you get any sense out of *that* sort of thing?"

"Simple, sir," answered Evan with a grin. "*Lusser* is close enough to *lasseryer* in its construction for the alterations to be parallel."

"But what does *lasseryer* mean?" persisted Paavo.

"When two small boys who are strangers to each other chance to meet in an alley, what's the first thing one of them is likely to say to the other?" countered Evan.

"It's been a long time since I was a boy," said Paavo reflectively. "What do they say to each other, Evan?"

Evan smiled through split lips.

"*'Wrestle you!'*" he answered.

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CALLING DR. WALLACE

Dear R.A.W.L.:

This is re your exchange with Dr. Wallace in Nov. SFQ. Specifically page 108, 2nd paragraph where you mention an early campaign against non-sibilant hissing, as

"Get out of here," he hissed.

But just what *is* a "hiss" and precisely how produced?

My dictionary claims it is a sound like that of the letters prolonged, presumably as in "ssssss". On the other hand, I've never heard any language expert object to the claims of naturalists and scientists that certain reptiles, mammals and bird can and do "hiss."

But are these animal hisses a between-the-teeth sort of sibilance, or "ssss"? Indeed they are not, at least the ones I've personally noted. I'm very familiar with at least three animals that hiss, the common eastern Hissing-adder (or Hognose-adder), the Snapping-turtle and the Angora cat. I've heard all of these animals "hiss" many times, and each time the

sound was accomplished *without* true sibilance ("ssss") at all, but by forcing air outward thru constricted *throat* passages. The cat and turtle opened their mouths very widely when hissing; the adder opened its mouth usually only about one-third, but sometimes halfway. And the sounds thus produced are perhaps best rendered as "hhhhhhaaaaa", inflecting the a as in *hat*, sometimes as in *ah*. Most certainly the sounds were *not* an "ssss".

My point is that such passages as "Get out of here," he hissed," are perfectly legitimate and proper, if predicted on animal-hissing. And isn't that kind of hissing just what the word was, at least originally, intended to convey? Animals apparently use such sounds instinctively as a bluff or defense, but did you ever hear an enraged man or animal going "ssss"? No, even man would likely vent his rage in "hhhhh"-based sounds, same as when you venomously whisper "*Get out of here!*". I'm definitely no grammarian, but I've a suspicion that a great big hoax (unintentional, of course) has been per-

petrated on sf authors ever since Koenig began it in the 40's. And I think most animals will hiss you if you don't agree, sans-sibilance that is.

Also, on page 106: 2d paragraph, quote: "Moreover, they are in the control of the editor, who ought therefore to control them, but doesn't." Unquote.

Literally, this statement establishes three things:

(a) they are controlled by the editor,

(b) the editor ought to control them, and

(c) the editor does not control them. (!)

Now, either (a) plus (b), or (b) plus (c) makes sense. But (a) plus (b) plus (c) leaves me frustrated.

I know what Dr. Wallace intended—but did he say it?

KEITH NELSON, 1133
Green Street, Marietta,
Ohio.

I'm itching to answer this myself, Keith, but will send a copy to Dr. Wallace, so he can have the first comeback at you.

ATTENTION DR. ASIMOV

Dear Editor:

I picked up the August SFQ the other day and immediately began reading Asimov's "Axioms For Everybody." Tho somewhat entertaining, I would like to disagree with Mr. Asimov. His article was put forth in a very entertaining and humorous manner, but, while disproving a good many axioms, he did not think that in doing so his ideas were based on a very basic axiom which states "two opposite things cannot co-exist in the same plane." That is, a truth cannot be a lie, etc. But—can it? The idea was brought up, by the way, by Henry Kuttner in his book "The Fairy Chessman." But set this down as an axiom and the Earth would go around the sun while the sun went around the Earth. Either

way, Asimov is right—but wrong.

Which brings me to a few other things that I have noticed in the too few SFQ's I have on hand. For instance, your editorial last issue...

I believe the premise that you were trying to get across was that there are not any magazines that are run by the readers. First of all, you needn't worry about me yapping on about Ray Palmer or Paul Fairman, or even Bill Hamling with their goshowowohboyect. mags. It isn't hard to tell to whom they are slanted. Now, the editor *must* please the readers. He *must*, or the mag will gather dust. Therefore, if enough readers write in and say "I hate stories by Grbvttlz," then you would undoubtedly have to stop publishing him, unless he comes up with something different than he has been writing. However, as to actual control so far as writers go, Asf is run by the reader. If I may quote John W. Campbell, "The readers, not I, determine the editorial policy" and "Rates: 3c a word, up to 3½-4c on published reader's votes." And this was no propaganda—it was in a *Writer's Digest*, circa 1953 that I picked up. Sam Mines wrote it, and as I remember, SFQ, *Dynamic* and F&SFS were in there, also.

Which brings me to another point—what happened to the days when you were giving away original illustrations to the three best letter writers? I'd like to see it back, I think, because it may make some people get up and think, where before they are content to do nothing. Eh?

That's as far as I can go speaking of such as that. SFQ is something from a by-gone age—a pulp-sized magazine. Not pocket-sized, not easy to carry, but I'd trade a digest—nay two digests for a ragged edged pulp-sized magazine, fanzine reviews, fiction, entertaining articles, contests, good covers, interesting interior illos, long letter column, provocative editorials, and—I could go on. I write to this Meyers gent, and we hate each other like brothers (and by that I mean tooth-and-nail), but I do agree that SFQ comes close to a

fan's heart. I love it—leave it, and I'll like it.

Oh yes, anybody wanna feud?

RICHARD W. BROWN,
127 Roberts Street, Pasadena 3, Calif.

There are several reasons why we discontinued offering original illustrations to the writers of the best-liked letters.

(1) We buy reproduction rights to an original illustration or color painting, not the illustration or painting itself. Thus, the artist has the right to request his original back once it has been used in our books. Now in actual practice, most artists are not interested in recovering their originals; but science fiction artists are often an exception. Thus, we found that, frequently, the most desirable original in an issue would not be available to a contest winner; sometimes, none would be available.

(2) Frequently, the winners would not inform us as to which original they desired. The set-up was that the 1st place winner had first pick, the 2d place winner second choice, and so on. What often happened was that a 2d or 3d place winner wrote us promptly, making his selections—but we could do nothing until we heard from whomever had priority. And by the time we did hear, the originals were buried somewhere.

(3) Most important of all, the votes for letters fell off to the point where we just could not pick winners.

However, I'm willing to try again; in the voting coupon in this issue, you'll find a place to vote for letter writers. Since we do not run as many letters as we did in the past (see the reply to Bill Meyers' letter for reasons), the prizes will have to go to just one letter-writer per issue, for the time being. And the winner can name the artist, from whose stock of origin-

als we have on hand we will select as good an example as we can find at the time.

THE LETTERS QUESTION

Dear R.A.W.L.:

If this August issue of SFQ is typical of forthcoming issues, the extra 10c tariff is more than welcome.

I liked the Emsh cover fairly well but the white background just doesn't set too well with me. I always like Emsh (Or whoever the cover artist may be) to fill out the entire painting, with as much detail as possible. Gives the mag a much better appearance; the present white background looks so much like the countless western and mystery pulps with the same format that it's usually hard to spot the one good mag in a host of trash. And this will not do.

And speaking of covers, how about more Freas? I like Freas' paintings much more than his interior illos and with Emsh, vice versa.

But now to cover the issue, itself.

"Interference" rambled on for several more pages, and never stopped said rambling...the plot could have been worked and turned into something terrific, but somehow Berry's writing just didn't strike me as being too interesting. Oh, the story was better than average; I guess what disappointed me mostly was the spectacular ending which never came.

Asimov's article was really interesting. 'Twas entertaining to me because it was cut down to a layman's point of view. As you must know, most of his articles resemble passages excerpted directly from an advanced textbook. Not that I dislike advanced textbooks—I just look for something else in a science fiction magazine, be it fiction or article. Maybe it's that "special element"...

Wilson's "Locus Focus" really did me good. It reminded me quite a bit of a TV sequence where a large-mouthed woman begins her long sales-pitch and is quickly interrupt-

ed by a custard pie in the face. It lets off steam—it portrays what you've always wanted to do but never had the chance to do so. You might say it's a civilized version of the Roman gladiators. Which proves we are still barbarians or "civilized" people with barbarous instincts. But barbarian or no, by dam, this cost of living *is* getting outrageous...

Thomas's novelet was written well, but the big "difference" didn't strike me as hard as Sir Thomas seemed to think it would. In fact, the difference was pretty obvious once the trial got under way.

Ah, Carol Emshwiller's story really packed a padded but solid punch at the present way of life. Such a beautiful analogy of the current controversial prejudices written in such a satiric and biting manner shows that Mrs. Emshwiller has talent—real talent!

Madle turned out a better than average fan-column this time. Mainly because of its length. It's, of course, the best fan-column in the business

for a number of reasons: A reviewer who knows what he's talking about, material covering fannish subjects other than fanzines, and mainly, the unlimited length. If all your stories were rotten (perish the thought) Madle's column would still continue to sell SFQ to the fen. Do hope he reviews more fanzines next time.

"A Walk in the Snow" packed the punch so typical of well-written vignettes:

"The Tie Breakers" proved to be the better article of the issue from the over-all entertainment standpoint. I hope to see a Macklin article every issue. After all, it's been six months since his last article. I hope I don't have to wait six more for the next one.

"A Matter of Privacy" built up some pretty fair suspense but the killer's diabolic method of assassination was anything but diabolic. It was obvious.

Ah, Ayers' egoboo warmed my black heart. I'd like to see more letters from Ayers. Better yet, more

Now Every Other Month!

A Stellar Lineup of Memorable Tales

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HAUNTED CENTENNIAL

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A BIRD IN THE HAND

by David Gordon

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by Carol Emshwiller

The February 1958
issue (Number 35)
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**FUTURE
SCIENCE FICTION**

comments on how great I am. It's good for the ego.

Mr. Freeman's report seemed to cover the situation fairly well. I haven't read nearly all of them; though, so I can't find anything worth agreeing or disagreeing about. I'll be looking forward to his next little visit in 1959. Actually, I'd rather see him make annual reports. Over such a long period of time as he has now set, the stories don't stick too well in my memory. At least, most of them don't. An annual report would be much more appealing.

The lettercol, to me, doesn't seem to be as good as it could be. I guess it's because the illustrious fen have retired to fandom exclusively, for fear of being ridiculed as prozine letterhacks. It's too bad that it's considered a neofannish practice, as the lettercols in the old pulps were really hot—and filled with fine letters from the fen. This could probably be blamed on the death of the pulps, but since SFQ is one of the two remaining pulps, and actually, the only real pulp left, it seems like the lettercolumn would be more lively.

I've got two suggestions before I close. Is it absolutely necessary to run the hoard of "Are you Raptured", etc. ads in the rear of the zine? I'd sure like to see you cut at least half of them out; but if they're necessary to SFQ's existence, I won't gripe.

Secondly and lastly, how about printing the lettercol in smaller type so that more letters can be squeezed in. The present type you are using doesn't allow enough room for more than 4 or 5 letters each time; and yet in an old *Planet* (as a typical example) which used small type, you could always find at least 10 letters in half the space that is required for you to print said 4 or 5. So how about it?

BILL MEYERS,
4301 Shawnee Circle,
Chattanooga 11, Tenn.

I, too, would like to see fewer of the type of ads you mention, and would

like to run letters in 8 pt. type. Unfortunately...

(1) Advertising is sold in blocks for each month's list of our pulps. This issue of *Science Fiction Quarterly* contains the same paid ads you also find in *Double Action Western*, *Real Western Stories*, and *Today's Love Stories*. The editor has no say in the matter whatsoever.

(2) Our printers have 8 pt. type, (and smaller 10 pt. type than you see here) but not very much of it, since it is not generally used, outside of ads and layouts. It would not be worth their while to obtain extra fonts of this type just for use in one or two magazines a month (*Science Fiction Stories* now alternates with *Future Science Fiction*, so that we have one sf magazine every month, with an extra one four times a year). Nor does our publisher feel that the volume of mail received on these magazines justifies the purchase of such extra type on our part. If we received several hundred letters a month—indicating large-scale interest in the letter department—then it might be feasible; but we do not receive anything like that volume of mail. Fans and readers don't write in the way they did a couple of decades ago. We need more readers like you, Bill.

The next letter answers your question about Dr. Macklin.

DR. MACKLIN REGRETS...

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I'm sorry to have to deliver this no doubt crushing blow, but I'm afraid I won't be able to get the next "Science Fiction" article in to you by deadline time. It'll have to wait until next quarter.

As you know, my job keeps me away from home a great deal of the time, and every once in a while an unexpected assignment turns up and wrecks everything. I have mail piled up that I haven't answered—including

[Turn To Page 114]

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UP TO **54.1% More Gas Mileage!** UP TO **58.2% More Power!**
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It doesn't matter what kind of car you own. The sensational new discovery—"Motor Overhaul"—works miracles of instantly greater power, performance on all makes and models! "Motor Overhaul" is guaranteed to boost power 58.2%, give smoother performance—add 192% longer engine life to trucks, tractors, automobiles. Your car must give you greater performance or money back! Don't miss out. Order today!



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AFTER 180,000 MILES
WITHOUT ONE MAJOR REPAIR!**

This car, owned by Mr. M. J. Byrne of Chicago, Ill., was using two quarts of oil every five or six hundred miles—was losing compression, hard to start, slow to pick-up. Faced with a major repair job that would cost \$150, Mr. Byrne instead bought a \$2.98 can of "Motor Overhaul". Within the first few miles his car delivered faster pickup and greater power! It still hasn't had a major repair job—after 180,000 miles!

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS



"Motor Overhaul" actually makes your car run like new in 60 seconds because it goes to work instantly—while you drive—to recondition your motor—to give it a tremendous new power and pep!

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"Motor Overhaul" surface-lubricates every part where friction and abrasion take their toll. "Motor Overhaul's" action results in smoother performance within the first few miles!

Automatically Tightens Loose Parts

A "tight" engine gives fast pickup, smooth acceleration. Most old engines don't need expensive parts replacement when the surfaces are made glass-smooth by "Motor Overhaul." Pistons fit cylinders and rings the way they did hundreds of thousands of miles before! Your car—treated with "Motor Overhaul"—recovers all its pep and power and you stop wasting gas. It's almost like owning a brand new car for \$2.98! Send no money. Just mail coupon for sensational Motor Overhaul. But do it today!

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G. R. J. Matheson, Chicago, Ill. "Instead of a hundred dollar valve and ring job I added 'Motor Overhaul'. My car runs like new!"



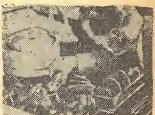
C. L. D. Grevatt, Ill. "I thought my car was all worn out after 60,000 miles. My car's at 110,000 miles—better than ever with 'Motor Overhaul' at 100,000 miles!"



R. F. Malone, Ill. "I never saw anything work so fast! 'Motor Overhaul' increased my pickup and gas mileage immediately!"



R. S. Hubbard, Park, Ill. "My car's eight years old. But so far I haven't had one major repair bill—thanks to 'Motor Overhaul'!"



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You don't have to be an automobile expert to use "Motor Overhaul." Just open the can and add it to your regular oil. Then watch your car perform better than you ever dreamed possible!

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- ☐ Please rush "Motor Overhaul"! I agree to pay postman \$2.98 plus C.O.D. postage. Some money-back guarantee.
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To The Man With HERNIA



Who Can Not Submit To Surgery

The man condemned to live with rupture, all too often faces a grim future.

There is only one known cure...and that is surgical correction. Yet, for many, this relief must be denied or delayed for any one of a variety of reasons. It is to this group of unfortunate persons that this message is directed.

There are two choices—to wear a truss, or not to wear one. But, since hernia never heals itself, and generally continues to become more severe, the second choice is eventually eliminated. That leaves only one question in the mind of the hernia sufferer: "What kind of a truss should I wear?" Until recently there was little choice. Most trusses all looked alike. They consisted of a leather covered steel spring which snapped around the hips, firmly pressing an unyielding pad against the hernia opening. Many hernia victims chose to be semi-invalids and risk danger of strangulation, rather than wear a truss.

Now a New Way to Support Hernia

Less than two years ago a man who had suffered from hernia himself for many years devised a new kind of support. It was so totally different from other trusses that the United States government recognized its exclusive design by granting him a patent.

Now this new device is available to hernia sufferers everywhere. It is revolutionary. There are no steel springs. No leather. No hard, gouging knobs. No unsightly bulk. "RUPTURE-GARD," as this new hernia support has been named, is suspended from the waist. There are no cruel straps, bands or springs around the hips to chafe and rub. It is as comfortable to wear as a pair of trousers—and just as easy to slip on or off.

There are no complications—such as ordering a "double," "right" or "left." RUPTURE-GARD takes care of all reducible inguinal hernia, providing safe protection for the person with double hernia, and desirable "balanced" pressure for the person with hernia on just one side.

The broad, flat pad is molded from firm, yet comfortable foam rubber, covered on the top by strong nylon mesh for cool comfort and complete washability.

You'll like RUPTURE-GARD. If you have hernia—or know someone suffering from this affliction—won't you do yourself a real favor right now, and mail the coupon below? There's absolutely no obligation—and you'll get the complete facts on RUPTURE-GARD by return mail, in a plain envelope!

TEAR OUT AND MAIL THIS COUPON NOW!

The Klenlen Co., Dept. DO-28 W
509 Wyandotte St., Kansas City 5, Mo.

Rush me in a plain envelope, full information about RUPTURE-GARD. I understand there is absolutely no obligation on my part.

Name.....
Address.....Zone.....
City.....State.....

SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

ing a very nice one from Isaac Asimov, to whom I must apologize soon—and several from fans. (Imagine! Me getting fanmail!) I simply haven't had time to answer them, but I'll get around to it within the next week or so.

Speaking of fans, several readers have written me, offering suggestions for future articles. Unfortunately, very few of these provide enough real meat—either there isn't enough to write an article about, or the subject doesn't fit into the series, fascinating as it may be. For example, one man suggested an article on time machines and time travel. His letter happens to be one of the few I've had time to answer; I told him that time travel and time machines are absolutely pure magic, and have no basis whatsoever in science at this stage of the game.

But, just the same, I do appreciate suggestions; and if any readers have ideas, I'd like to consider them. There may be a number of areas that neither you nor I have thought of so far. In the meantime, I'm keeping my butcher knife sharp, and I'm thinking of putting a one-horsepower motor on my meatgrinder.

RICHARD H. MACKLIN,
Ph. D.,
Garnerville, New York

"ATROCIOUS"?

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

This is atrocious. I think I spelled it right but no matter whether I spelled it right or not, it is still atrocious. You people are terrible. I missed your first two issues. Why?

I checked with my dealer and he said he had the first two issues but they were sold out and that had to happen in two or three days. They must have been very good but my dealer won't save any of the new mags. for me to look at so, as a result, I missed your first two issues.

The August issue I find fascinating, but I won't say that they are the best stories since I have a very fine taste, but they are very good.

Mr. Jourdan put forth a truly sci-
[Turn To Page 118]

Reducing Specialist Says:
LOSE WEIGHT

Where
It
Shows
Most

REDUCE

MOST ANY
PART OF
THE
BODY WITH

ELECTRIC Spot Reducer

Relaxing • Soothing
Penetrating Massage



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LABORATORY
APPROVED



FOR GREATEST BENEFIT IN REDUCING by message use SPOT REDUCER with or without electricity—Also used as an aid in the relief of pains for which massage is indicated.



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GRASP
HANDLE
AND
APPLY

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— WE, THE MARAUDERS (Silverberg) —
 — CHIP ON THE SHOULDER (Fontenay) —
 — THE LOW AND THE MIGHTY (Garrett) —
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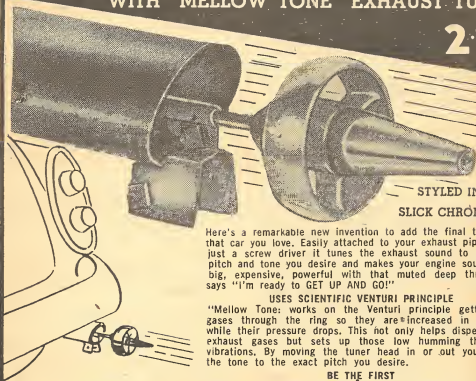
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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

ence fiction effort with his change of pace, "Consolation Prize" which must have taken some real good thinking and Mr. Berry in "Interference went, I believe, a little beyond that mark. I didn't quite appreciate Mr. Thomas' effort in "The Attractive Nuisance" since it was a little vague at times, but again that is one of those stories that take a little time to realize the full value, but the "Locus Focus" was the most amusing.

Your letter column deserves some note since I haven't as yet read the articles (saving the good part for last). One letter would have held great interest for me but I missed that issue and read another commenting on it. This letter was written by Mr. James W. Ayers about a letter from Mr. Bill Meyers.

From what I gather neither Mr. Ayers or Mr. Meyers believe in ESP, so let us have a little discussion about ESP and I would like to point out the following facts.

1. I experiment with ESP
2. If there were no such thing as ESP, I could not experiment with it.
3. Hundreds of others in this state have dealt with it.
4. Learned doctors and professors in some of the most famous colleges in the world, experiment with it.
5. My own organization, "The Society of Beau Ideal" recognizes this phenomenon and has intentions of using it.

If anyone doubts the possibilities of ESP, let this organization of hundreds vouch for it, because we will be using it within months.

Mr. Ayers and Mr. Meyers also commented upon the possibility of matter traveling instantly through space but I wonder if either realize that light, the fastest agent known to science, does not travel instantly. I have not said that it is not possible to travel instantly. This is, indeed, a question that will be answered in time to start and start it has. It may.

[Turn To Page 120]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

be possible but few know what it will concern.

Those who are familiar with high school chemistry know that matter can be broken down into particles of energy, but matter itself can not travel faster than the speed of light even in space; however, energy can assume the appearance of light. Light is energy.

In short, for those not able to follow, according to Einstein's theory, matter can not travel faster than the speed of light which is energy. High School chemistry teaches that matter can be broken into particles of energy in order to travel through space, instantly?

I hope to have some answers for they should be interesting since there are mistakes, deliberate, in parts of this theory.

KENNETH E. FRITSCH,
160 Nurnberger Drive,
Pittsburgh 36, Pa.

Let's put it this way, Mr. Fritsch.

1. I have written stories and articles about the *Necronomicon*.
2. If there were no such book as the *Necronomicon*, I could not write about it.

[Turn To Page 122]

Tops in Mystery and Detective Fiction

DEATH IS MY LEGACY
by Margaret Manners
CREEPY TIME GAL
by Arthur J. Burks

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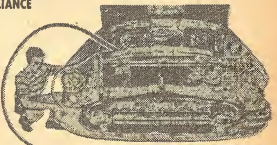
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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

3. Hundreds of other writers and fans have written about it.

4. Various learned men, some with imposing academic pedigrees, have discussed it.

5. There has been at least one organization devoted to study and research on the subject.

Question: does this prove the existence of a book entitled the *Necronomicon*?

Answer: Not only does it prove nothing of the kind, but I am well aware, and most of the persons included in points 3, 4, and 5 are well aware, that there is not, and never was, any such book as the *Necronomicon*.

The above analogy does not prove the non-existence of ESP, of course; I used it to demonstrate that this sort of evidence does not constitute positive proof of ESP's existence.

You will often find that many science fiction readers and authors are very sceptical people; this is partly due to the fact that they are used to taking fantasy semi-seriously, as a game, but are careful not to fall for their own pitch—or anyone else's pitch which has a similar ring. And ESP, Psi, Flying Saucers, Dianetics, etc., are oh so similar!

[Turn To Page 124]

Invitation

Harry Bates used to refer to his letter-writing readers as "associate editors". Well, that's stretching it a little, but he had a sound point. Readers who vote on stories, who let their opinions become known, do carry weight. The consensus is the only guide an editor has. So why not turn to page 116, and find out how to become an "associate"?

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY ON TO DZYN

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

In a ducky magazine shop which contains in its small space nearly everything from *Life's* hard-cover edition of "The World We Live In" to the peek-in-pocket or under-pillow pictorials, I located SFQ among the other stf. magazines in a nook by itself. Was I glad! Disappointment with SFQ is very unlikely, I know by past purchases.

Since I have not read all the stories yet, I cannot evaluate them comparatively. In "Quick Freeze" I found a very readable story of just the right style and length, but since it is the only story of this issue which I have read, I cannot say how it rates. Silverberg's trade-jargon was believable, and this puts him in a class with those who make astronomical predictions. I hope that this civilization can last long enough to see them verified, but I am also aware of the probability that a far better civilization will supplant this one, quite independently of the world's political chess-board. The style which Silverberg used made it possible for me, a 40-year-old, to imagine myself right there with the two space-crews, sharing with them their race with time and worrying about what to do and how to go about it. If a story can do that to me, then that story is a success.

In the letter department, I am confronted with a larger type face. This may mean less strain on some people's eyes, but I wonder how many letters can be squeezed into each issue. Lest this one become too long to be printed, I shall proceed at once to respond to F. W. Zwicky's letter, anent the topic on the origin of Man.

He mentions the "highly allegorical" Biblical account. To all scholars I recommend, not just any old printing of the Authorized Version, nor the large beautified wares on sale, but only the Scotfield Reference Bible. It may not have all the "helps" which other Bibles have, but in my

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

opinion, it is the best for exegetical purposes. The Scofield Bible is available at, or through, your nearest Bible House or religious book shop, at a reasonable price. Mr. Zwicky says the Biblical account is "difficult to understand", and this makes me wonder how best to word my reply. I can say in general that the more different sources one consults (openmindedly as usual), the more one can get out of each one of them. I think it was Morse who said: "Observe, remember, and compare." Again, irrelevantly I might add, just to elucidate this saying, that the full comprehension of how the materials of Nature behave, enables one to think of ways to work these materials in a minimum of time. But industrial efficiency is not what I would allude to now. Meditation "between the books" as it were, enables one to pose the research queries which take one almost in a bee-line towards a solution. All this, for what it may be worth, to someone, somewhere.

For example, try visualizing the first person plural in Genesis 1: 26 in terms to the step-wise creation of the earliest in the *Secret Book of Dzyan* (quoted by Blavatsky in "The Secret Doctrine"), and then match the nearest logical result with Job 38: 7 and Psalm 82: 1, 6. A great gap in time, perhaps millions of years, separates the contents of these two Bible references. In the initial phases of Earth's geophysical history there had been no particular hurry, and, as some scientists seem to have realized, the processes of evolution do not exclude creation. However, when one of the governing cherubim began to brew murderous thoughts of insubordination and treason, as Ezek. 28: 13-19 vividly sets forth, the timetable of the Earth had to be telescoped and accelerated to the point where the world is now rushing to a smashing climax; and then Isaiah 24: 21 and Rev. 2: 7, 8 will occur simultaneously. Thus, a general "housecleaning" may include also the upper echelons of the Family of God, that

[Turn To Page 128]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

is, of the hosts of celestial sons (SONS, not SUNS). What all this has to do with the origin of Man is not at once apparent, until we see that what we can find out about the entire picture may help us to get some sense out of isolated pieces of it. Perhaps the Bible is here on Earth in order to prepare us, at our option, for positions which were left vacant when entire planets were vaporized in the holocaust of past cosmic wars, or judgments, or both. We have scattered clues about this in the asteroid belt, and elsewhere. What this will lead to, in terms of Man in anthropology and para-geography, I don't know. I haven't seen more than a few pieces of the whole picture puzzle, thus far. How about it, sagacious readers—shall we discuss this topic further in a live and prolonged flurry of letters? Or shall this topic die, as is too often the case?

VICTOR M. WAAGE,
Duluth, Minn.

Those who believe that the Bible relates a true account of creation, presented in a form comprehensible to people of the time when it was set down, aren't likely to be impressed with the "The Secret Book of Dzyan". Those who consider the Bible account sheer fantasy may or may not be impressed with an "explanation" of it by fantasy. I state this in the trust that any readers who consider me wrong won't just sit back and let me stew in ignorance.

Key Question

[continued from page 7]

and poetic theme of love-and-death" occurs in one form or another, one aspect or another, in all fiction worth reading; and that honesty of treatment is one of the yardsticks by which we measure the worth of the particular exhibit. I tried to show a few of the many ways in which this could

[Turn To Page 130]

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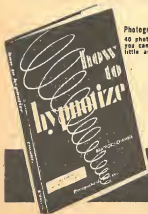
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appear without the reader always being aware of the fact.

Now, from your comment, I was not talking, really about "the tragic and poetic theme of love-and-death", but just about dealing honestly with love and death. Could be. You have made a distinction which I certainly did not.

But we'll have to let Damon speak for himself from here on out. Was he speaking academically, as you believe—in which case your arguments seem to follow, and I mis-read—or is this an instance of unintentional ambiguity on knight's part?

In either event, I'm not convinced that science-fiction cannot, positively can *not* deal with the matter of love and death without disqualifying itself as science fiction.

However, this strikes me as being a crucial question, one which has to be settled if we are going to arrive at

anything like a true understanding of the nature of science fiction. If your stand is correct, Jim, then I think that the question of whether science fiction is, or ever can be, literature is definitely settled in the negative. Despite your statement that a science fiction tale *could* deal honestly with the "theme...of love-and-death" I think that, by your definitions, any novel or story which did would be "science fiction only by courtesy, by a sort of fringe definition made so that science-fictionists could claim it for their territory.

No, if your position is correct, then it seems to follow that science fiction is just what many have been saying all along: a severely-restricted field of literary work, of no more than passing interest, however well done. The finest possible examples can survive only as curios. R.A.W.L.

Mating Call

(continued from page 75)

Its body trembled with the other's nearness and every tissue of it demanded satisfaction. But it kept the men in its mind. The other was not far behind. The Grakse fought against its cravings until it could not control them any longer.

But it was far enough. They were at the orbit of Pluto. It gave one last thought to Earth; a goodbye to men from a creature they had never known.

The two Grakses squared off, circling each other carefully. A section of skin peeled off each and their backs arched into perfect hemispheres of the damping metal. A million long tentacles extended from their fronts, exuded by their glands and composed of long polymers of molecules made of heavy elements beyond those created by men.

They circled, in the ecstasy that preceded embrace. The circling slowed and they probed each other. It was time for the climax.

Suddenly they hurled themselves at each other. A million tons merged into one body. The tentacles interlocked into a perfect sphere. Perfect uniting.

Critical mass.

The damper held for a full second. The long polymers entwined to become the seeds of new Grakses. The seed exploded into space. Millions of potential new Grakses, but most would drift in space or fall into suns or land on foodless planets and die of lack of nourishment.

But a few would live and grow. The Grakse knew that and in its last second of life knew the answer to its own origin.

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